

# IN THESE TIMES

OBAMA'S MINISTER SPREADS THE WORD • 10

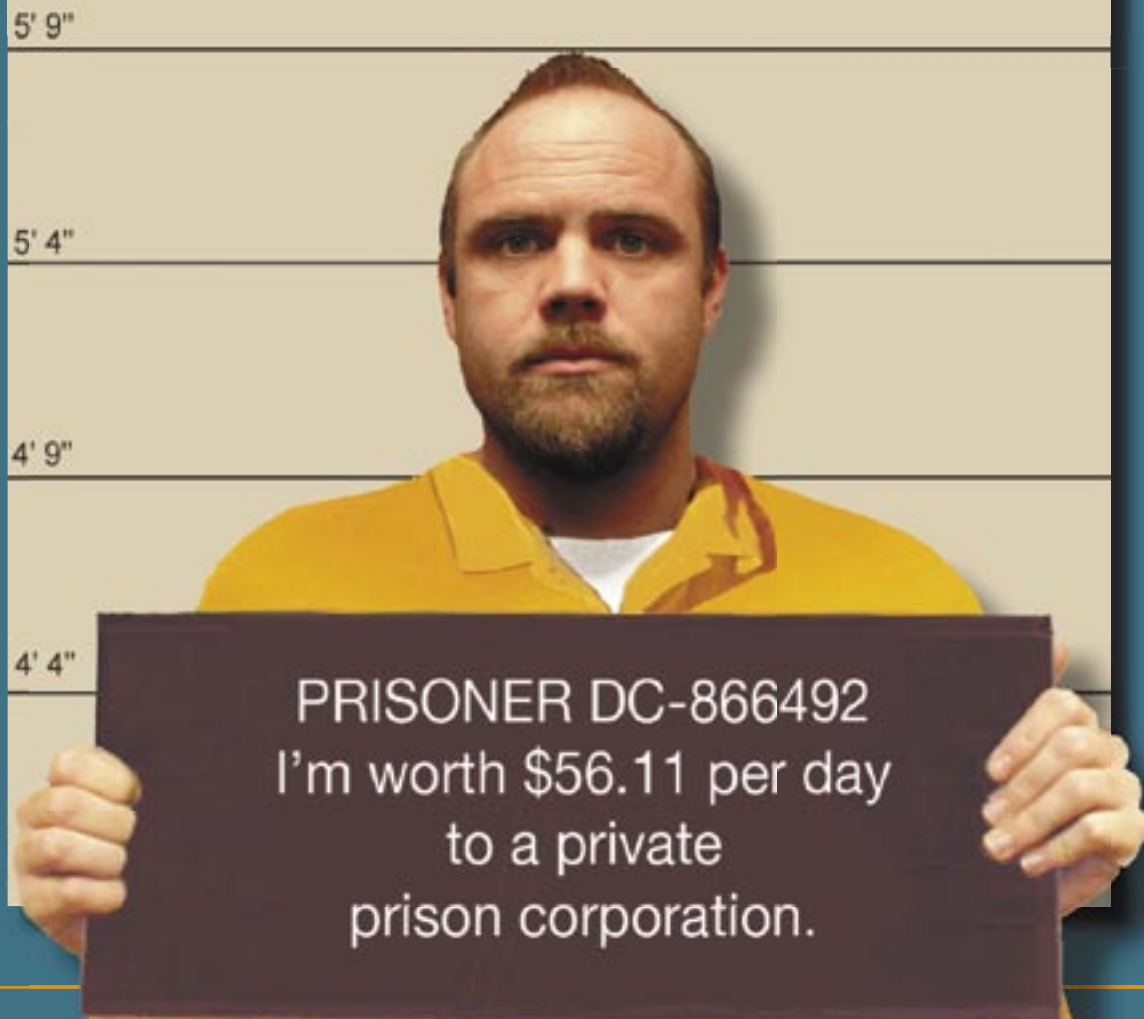
AXIS OF OIL: CHINA, INDIA AND US • 20

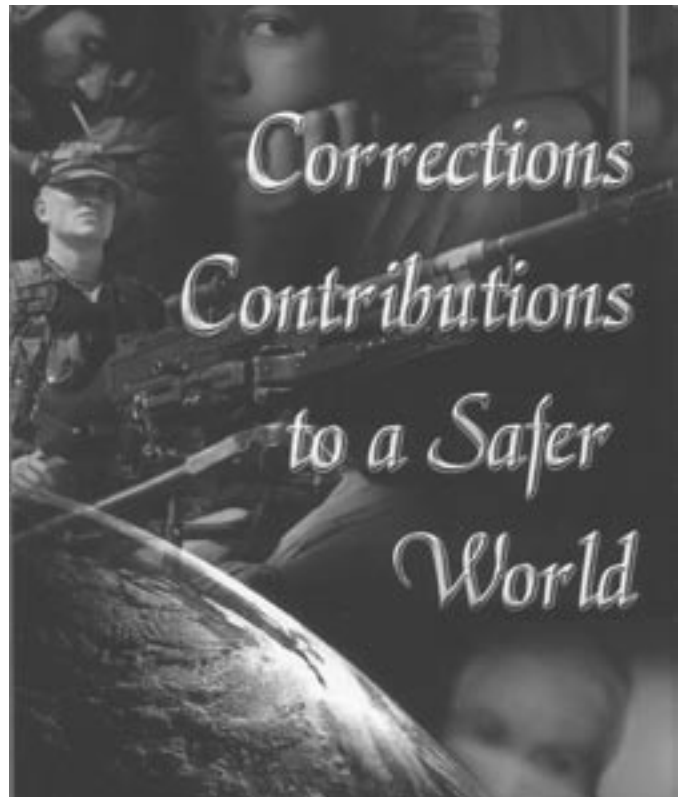
BILL MOYERS ON THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT • 22

THE DOCS ROCK SUNDANCE • 24

## Cashing in on Cons

### Undercover at the American Correctional Association Conference





# Contents

Volume 29 - Number 7

## Freedom from Reality By Robert Parry

14 A compliant press lets Bush spin an inaugural yarn of abstract nonsense.

## Cashing in on Cons By Silja J.A. Talvi

16 Undercover at the 2005 American Correctional Association Winter Conference.

## The Axis of Oil By Jehangir Pocha

20 China's and India's growing oil demand could send fuel prices skyrocketing.

## Blind Faith By Bill Moyers

22 The Bush administration brings together ideology and theology.

Cover by Jim Rinnert

11 **Capitol Report** By Craig Aaron  
Michael Powell's ill communication.

12 **Viewpoint** By Cynthia Cooper  
Dems look to jettison their pro-choice base.

13 **The Third Coast** By Salim Muwakkil  
Racism's persistent taint.

## 6 The Other Aftershock By Tim Shorrock

The Bush administration seeks to normalize ties with Indonesia and its brutal military.

## 8 Distortion 101 By Steve Yoder

In spite of the facts, Bush continues to push abstinence-only education.

## 8 Appall-O-Meter By Dave Mulcahey

10 **In Person** By Emily Udell  
When Rev. Jeremiah Wright speaks, Barack Obama listens.

## 24 • Docs Rock Sundance By Pat Aufderheide

**FILM** Examining Enron, the military-industrial complex and Lubbock, Texas.

## 26 • Comings and Goings By Kevin Canfield

**MUSIC** The Wedding Present returns, as McLusky signs off.

## 27 • Lincoln Unvarnished By Phyllis Eckhaus

**BOOKS** The intimate life of an American Caesar.

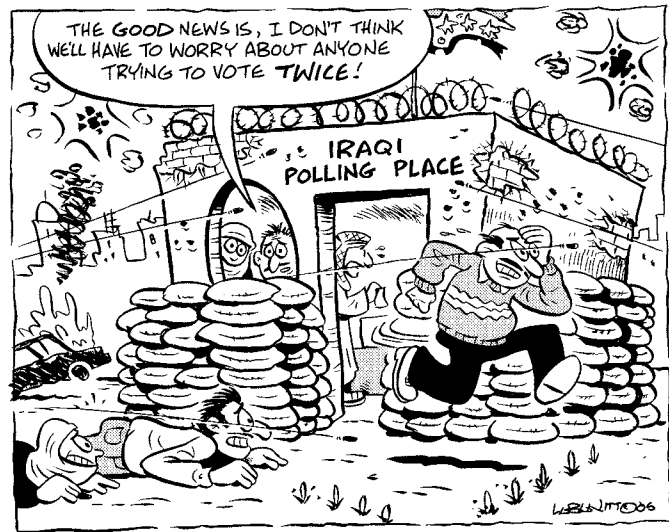
## 32 • Slow Food for a Dying Planet By Mark Winne

**BOOKS** The revolution will be delicious.

“The degree of civilization  
in a society can be judged  
by entering its prisons.”

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

TERRY LABAN



# Editorial

## R.I.P. FDR? By Joel Bleifuss

In his inaugural address, George W. Bush accomplished two things. Judging from the accolades, he successfully branded his administration—“freedom” is its name.

And in freedom’s name he laid out an agenda borrowed from the libertarian right—the establishment of an ownership society:

In America’s ideal of freedom, citizens find the dignity and security of economic independence, instead of laboring on the edge of subsistence. This is the broader definition of liberty that motivated the Homestead Act, the Social Security Act and the G.I. Bill of Rights. And now we will extend this vision by reforming great institutions to serve the needs of our time. To give every American a stake in the promise and future of our country, we will ... build an ownership society. We will widen the ownership of homes and businesses, retirement savings and health insurance.

Indeed, his speech could have been written by the Cato Institute’s Tom Palmer, who has said, “The extension of ownership rights to fields that have been dominated by government power—including Social Security, medical care and schooling—represents an opportunity for Americans to enjoy ... the responsibility, freedom and prosperity that only ownership can make possible.”

“Ownership society” is a pleasant-

sounding euphemism for privatization. And top on the list for privatization is Social Security, the program that allows the government to guarantee an income for those in old age, those whose breadwinner has died or those who have been seriously injured and are unable to work. The program was established as an acknowledgment that we as a people have a collective responsibility to provide for our fellow citizens.

Creating an ownership society, said Bush, will prepare “our people for the challenges of life in a free society [by] making every citizen an agent of his or her own destiny.” In other words, it will make everyone a free agent.

Getting rid of Social Security also performs another service. Through the creation of individual retirement accounts, it transfers an immense amount of wealth from the public to the private sector—that is, to the real owners of our society, the 1 percent of the population that owns nearly 40 percent of the nation’s wealth.

In essence, Bush’s proposal to create an “ownership society” bears witness to H.L. Mencken’s definition of an American: “He

is intensely and cocksurely moral, but his morality and his self-interest are crudely identical.” Or, as Bush put it, “America’s vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one.”

Bush’s interest in “America’s vital interests” is in sharp contrast to Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s vision. In his inauguration speech of 1937, FDR warned against “dulled conscience, irresponsibility and ruthless self-interest.” He continued:

In this nation I see ... millions of families trying to live on incomes so meager that the pall of family disaster hangs over them day by day. ... We are determined to make every American citizen the subject of his country’s interest and concern. ... The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little. ... Overwhelmingly, we of the Republic are men and women of good will [who] will insist that every agency of popular government use effective instruments to carry out their will. ... They will demand a nation uncorrupted by cancers of injustice and, therefore, strong among the nations in its example of the will to peace.

That president created Social Security; the current one seems intent on getting rid of it.

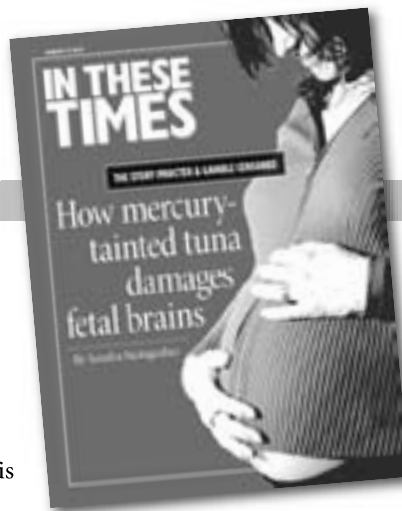
“Americans, of all people, should never be surprised by the power of our ideals,” said Bush, a man whose vision of an “ownership society” represents the death of the ideal that we are all members of a community, and that an injury to one is an injury to all. ■

# Letters

## Stealing from Peter

I take issue with Dean Baker's assertion that the Social Security trust fund is real, and that those who state otherwise are "misleading the public" ("Cutting Our Benefits," January 3). A trust fund is only as real as the assets comprising it, and a bond held by the same entity (in the case of Social Security, the federal government) that issued it cannot truthfully be characterized as an asset. The Social Security bonds may be real in terms of being backed by the full faith of the U.S. government, and real in that they will be honored, but they are not real in terms of representing an asset that can be drawn upon. Baker tacitly

acknowledges this when he states that these bonds must be repaid from general revenue. What Baker doesn't acknowledge, but which should be obvious, is that money diverted from general revenue cannot be spent on other programs, programs that people depend upon. Here we are, telling Joe Sixpack that we're taking extra money from his paycheck in order to finance his retirement, and yet when the time comes to make good on our promise, we're going to steal that money from his grandchildren by short-changing Head Start and the Children's Health Insurance Program. In the meantime, the Bush



dants) owe close to \$2 trillion to Social Security beneficiaries, most of whom are middle- and lower-income people. We better damn well insist that they pay their bills.

## Get Your House in Order

Please forgive me if this letter is unintelligible, but as an "ignorant dunce" and a "Neanderthal" this task may be outside my knuckle-dragging capabilities ("Stages of Grief," December 13, 2004). I am a self-employed cleaning woman making less than \$18,000 per year, and I am a registered Independent, since my values are not clearly defined by either of the two major parties. Prior to the 2000 election I became actively involved with the Green Party and volunteered many hours and dollars in support of Ralph Nader. How could I have been so naive as to think that I had the right to vote for a person I thought was best suited for the job?

After the 2000 election debacle I continued to read progressive magazines, but again became disenchanted as month after month writers demonized Nader and placed the blame squarely on his shoulders. Far be it for the Democrats to use this time for self-reflection and organization, or to take personal responsibility. I eventually got angry because I was indirectly being condemned for wanting more than what the stagnant Republican and Democratic parties were offering.

So I voted for Bush out of frustration and disgust because I couldn't take any more self-righteous condemnation from the complacent hypocrites who continued to insist that my third-party vote was foolish.

administration is using the Social Security surplus to fund tax cuts for Donald Trump and Peter Peterson. Something smells rotten here, and it's time for people who know better—trained economists like Dean Baker—to stop holding their noses, take a big whiff and start telling the truth.

James D. Shaw  
Grand Blanc, Mich.

## DEAN BAKER RESPONDS

*If we can skip the philosophy and just look at the facts, the Social Security trust fund is very simple. Social Security bought government bonds with its surplus in exactly the same way that Bill Gates, Donald Trump, or any private pension plan buys government bonds. The government is legally obligated to repay the bonds held by the trust fund in the same way that it is legally obligated to repay the bonds held by Bill Gates, Donald Trump and any private pension plan.*

*It will be a burden to repay the bonds held by Social Security, just as it is a burden to repay all the other debts of the government. But why would anyone blame Social Security for this burden? One can claim that we borrowed more than we should have to finance the tax cuts, the war, etc., but this has absolutely nothing to do with Social Security.*

*The reality is that higher-income taxpayers (the people who pay the bulk of the income tax, not Joe Sixpack and his descen-*

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## DISCUSSION

"I came of age when abortions were illegal. A woman carrying a dead fetus had to wait until her body naturally miscarried. This is much more dangerous than having a planned and scheduled medical procedure. Some abortions occurred even though they were illegal. People just didn't talk about it much. The privileged (wealthy) had nice, safe abortions in modern hospitals. The middle class had abortions in hotel rooms. Others had abortions in less sanitary places. Many doctors felt justified in sterilizing any woman who had an abortion. Consent was not required.

Making abortion illegal will drive it out of mainstream medicine. There are no easy answers. I hope none of my beloved nieces and granddaughters are ever faced with an unplanned pregnancy. Should that happen, I hope they don't consider an abortion their best or only option. However, I would also hope that if they do have an abortion, it would be as safe as medically possible and allow them to bear healthy children later. That's what *Roe v. Wade* allows."

Join the debate at the ITT List, [www.theittlist.com](http://www.theittlist.com).



Bush was given a mandate by the people to sustain their overconsumptive lifestyles by any means necessary, and the left is as much an accomplice as the right.

Being reproached for four years by a group that can't even organize itself enough to nominate a viable candidate is demoralizing. Had the Democrats been observing Karl Rove instead of droning on in such an elitist manner, they would have noticed indicators and chosen a winner. The Republicans don't take time off between elections. You have another four more years to get your act together and choose a real candidate. Try not to blow it in 2008.

Lisa M. McCune-Leduc  
Belchertown, Mass.

## Christians Are Lefties Too

In response to Craig Aaron's "A Little More to the Left" (January 3), I have been a union steward and activist for 28 years, and belong to a local peace group. I consider myself a progressive and a pacifist, although some of the right-wingers in our local just call me a left-wing nut. In addition, our family has home-schooled our children for the past 15 years.

I agree with the title and theme of the column. Democrats running on Republican values and themes will never beat Republicans. The more the Democratic Leadership Coun-

cil pushes the Democratic Party to the right, the further right the Republicans will move. Maybe this is why 40 percent of the electorate did not bother to vote in the last election.

What bothers me about Aaron's column is the simplistic analysis and thinking evident in the second paragraph. He talks about the Democratic Party possibly moving to the right, citing stockbrokers, gun owners and home-schoolers as the sort of political and social Neanderthals that the Democrats are trying to attract.

As a Christian, home-schooling family, where exactly do we fit in the Craig Aaron scheme of political analysis and stereotyping? Does he personally know enough home-schoolers to substantiate his opinion?

It is important to never generalize. Many Christians do not

subscribe to the militant, anti-feminist fascism that passes for Christian thought among the Pat Robertsons, Jerry Falwells, et al. Daniel and Philip Berri-gan, Dorothy Day and Andrew Greeley are people the left should hold up as examples of progressive activists.

Guillaume Beaulieu  
Oak Lawn, Ill.

## Correction

Two errors appeared in "The Fight for Our Future" (February 14). A figure of 9 percent for private sector labor enrollment was incorrectly labeled as "public sector." In addition, John Sweeney did not establish the AFL-CIO's Organizing Institute; it was formed in 1989 and was in operation when he was elected to the AFL-CIO presidency in 1996.

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Soldiers parade during the 58th military anniversary in Denpasar, Indonesia.

BAY ISMOYO / AFP / GETTY

## The Other Aftershock

**The Bush administration seeks normalization of ties with Indonesia and its brutal military. By Tim Shorrock**

**T**HE BUSH ADMINISTRATION AND THE PENTAGON are leveraging warmer post-tsunami relations with Indonesia to convince Congress to lift its restrictions on full military ties with the world's largest Muslim nation. But lawmakers and human rights groups say the Indonesian government must first account for its past abuses in East Timor and end its repressive military tactics in sections of the country seeking independence.

"Many of my colleagues and I firmly believe that now is not the time to advance efforts toward normalizing military relations," wrote Rep. Lane Evans (D-Ill.), a member of the House Armed Services Committee, in a January 18 letter to Adm. Thomas Fargo, the commander of the U.S. Pacific Command who is leading the Pentagon's efforts. Evans' views are widely held in Congress, where even Republicans are wary of the Indonesian army, known as the TNI, and its record of corruption and brutality.

The administration's push began in January, when Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz visited Aceh province, where an estimated 220,000 people were killed by the tsunami. The U.S. military relief effort marked the highest level of U.S.-Indonesian cooperation since 1991, when Congress imposed a ban on U.S. training of Indonesian officers under the State Department's International Military Education and Training (IMET) program. Upon his return, Wolfowitz urged Congress to reevaluate the IMET restrictions. "We can have more positive influence that way," he told PBS's "Online News Hour."

The congressional ban, which also includes restrictions on U.S. arms sales to Jakarta, was extended in 2000 after militias trained by the TNI rampaged through East Timor on the eve of the country's historic independence vote, killing hundreds of people and wrecking the capital city of Dili. Under legislation passed last fall, Congress declared that IMET training cannot begin until the State

## In Harm's Way

On January 21, Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) wrote a letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, asking him to expedite a study on the rare but severe side effects of the anti-malaria drug Lariam, which has been given to troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. After pressure from the House Armed Services Committee, the Pentagon terminated the use of Lariam in Iraq but has been slow in researching its effects.

Lariam was invented by the Army in the '70s to replace chloroquine, which was unsuccessful against certain strains of the disease in Southeast Asia. Lariam is highly effective in both preventing and treating malaria and its resistant strains.

Protection, however, can come at a nasty price. Among the side effects for Lariam—according to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)—are anxiety, paranoia, depression, hallucinations, nightmares, brain damage, vestibular (inner ear) damage and suicidal thoughts.

At least 18 soldiers have been diagnosed with brain or vestibular damage from Lariam toxicity, according to Feinstein's office. Concerns were also raised by the slew of spousal murders at Fort Bragg in 2002, after which three of the soldiers committed suicide. All of the soldiers involved had taken Lariam.

The FDA requires that a warning be issued to patients prescribed the drug, but according to Steve Robinson, executive director of the National Gulf War Resource Center, many soldiers were never informed of the potential side effects.

In June 2004, the Pentagon responded to calls by Feinstein with a promise to conduct a study. But, Robinson says, the Pentagon's study is different from the one requested by Feinstein, retroactively examining Lariam's effects on soldiers during the '80s and '90s instead of surveying current troops. Robinson believes the change is because the Pentagon—despite being required by law to do so—hasn't kept proper records on soldiers' prescriptions, making it impossible to track any correlation between side effects and use of the drug.

—Brian H. Kehrl

Department confirms that the Indonesian government has fully cooperated in the FBI's investigation into the August 31, 2002 murders of two American employees of the mining giant Freeport McMoRan during a military-style ambush in West Papua province.

After her televised confirmation hearings, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told Congress that the administration is "currently evaluating whether to issue the required determination." But she was unequivocal on the training funds. "IMET for Indonesia is in the U.S. interest," she said in a written response to questions posed to her by Sen. Joseph Biden (D-Del.). IMET, she added, will "strengthen the professionalism of military officers, especially with respect to the norms of democratic civil-military relations such as transparency, civilian supremacy, public accountability and respect for human rights."

But recent actions by the TNI have not helped the administration's cause. At the time of the tsunami disaster, Aceh had been closed to outside observers and humanitarian groups since May 2003, when martial law was declared. By all accounts, TNI's fighting with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM)—the armed group seeking independence—has been savage.

Last November, Human Rights Watch said it had "substantial evidence" that Indonesian security forces "have engaged in extra-judicial executions, forced disappearances, torture, beatings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and drastic limits on freedom of movement in Aceh." The watch group also cited the "massive internal displacement" of "tens of thousands of civilians [who] have fled their homes or been forcibly relocated by the military for operational reasons."

A similar situation is unfolding in West Papua in the eastern part of the archipelago. In January, the TNI launched an offensive against the Free Papua Movement (OPM)—the group fighting for independence there—driving an estimated 14,000 people from their homes in the Central Highlands.

The TNI responded to the tsunami like it was an extension of war. International aid agencies arriving on the scene objected to the military's severe restrictions on humanitarian operations and its demands that all relief flow through the army. The TNI made the situation worse by launching attacks on GAM units and withholding relief from civilians suspected of supporting the fighters. (In mid-January, the TNI said it had killed 120 rebels and accused them of trying to

derail aid efforts, a charge denied by GAM leaders.) Apparently stung by international criticism, the newly elected government of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono sent a delegation to Finland on January 28 to open talks with GAM's leadership.

Many U.S. lawmakers are still deeply uneasy about links between elements of the TNI and fundamentalist Muslim groups inside of Indonesia. Moreover, the Indonesian government's actions in West Papua, the site of the 2002 killings, is raising more questions about the TNI's ties to violent militia groups.

Last July, Attorney General John Ashcroft announced that a Washington grand jury had indicted Anthonious Wamang in the attack on the mining employees. Ashcroft identified Wamang as an "operational commander" of the military wing of the OPM. Rice, in her comments to Congress, said that the FBI had "uncovered no evidence indicating TNI involvement" in the murders.

But according to Elsham, an independent human rights group in Papua that has investigated the attack, Wamang has close ties to the Indonesian military. John Rumbiak, Elsham's director, told *In These Times* that Elsham has evidence that Wamang was "armed, wine and dined" by TNI officers and was once flown by the military to Jakarta, where he stayed in luxury hotels courtesy of the TNI—his ostensible enemies.

"The truth behind the killings of the two Americans is that the TNI was involved," Rumbiak says. "The issue is, were these military people operating as individuals or as an institution?"

Patsy Spier, a teacher who lost her husband in the 2002 Papua attack and was herself seriously wounded, said in an interview that she has "no doubt" that the FBI—which collected its own forensic evidence in Indonesia—had enough evidence to bring a case against Wamang. "But who ordered [the attack], and who supplied the guns and the ammunition?" she asks.

Spier says the FBI has offered to return to Indonesia to help apprehend additional participants in the attack and assist in issuing indictments, but "Indonesia hasn't responded." This case "should remind us why the training funds were held up in the first place," she said. "They've got to be willing to bring to justice those people who committed crimes and are still in service." ■

**TIM SHORROCK**, a freelance journalist based in Washington, is writing a book about corporations and foreign policy. He can be reached through his blog at [timshorrock.blogspot.com](http://timshorrock.blogspot.com).



# APPALL-O-METER

## 2.4 Over My Dead Beaver

The publicity brains at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) are either masters of absurdist humor or serious 'tards. I honestly can't figure out which. They caught wind, so the story goes, that President Bush had received a beaver cowboy hat, and was going to don it at his inauguration debauch. So, recognizing a pedagogical opportunity, PETA doyenne Ingrid Newkirk sent the commander-in-chief this little primer on *Castor canadensis*:

"Not only do these animals epitomize family values, they are also industrious role models: They are master architects whose complex sturdy lodges last for years, and they constantly maintain their homes, taking obvious pride in their work. Beavers are even known to enjoy flute music."

All the more reason to exult in their obliteration. They'll never understand red-state America.

## 2.4 It's Gettin' Hot In This Foxhole

Chemical weapons are reviled by all right-thinking people, and that's a little unfair. How seldom we pause to consider the benevolent uses to which these powerful tools may be put, like sparking a lot of hot guy-on-guy action behind enemy lines.

A laboratory at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio was apparently ready to go ahead on research into chemical agents that would inspire the love that dare not speak its name among enemy soldiers. But the unimaginative

straight-shooters at the Pentagon tossed a wet blanket on that party before it got started. According to Reuters, the gay aphrodisiac bomb was one of many ideas advanced for non-lethal chemical weapons, and

it was dismissed immediately.

"We feel it's very important to offer our deployed service members and their commanders a greater range of options in dealing with increasingly complex operation-

al environments," Marine Capt. Dan McSweeney, spokesman for the Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Directorate, explained to Reuters. (Translation: "*Mujahideen* are so hot right now! What's *up* with that?")

## 2.1 All For An Idea

"It is my choice what type of safety precautions I take," wrote Derek Kieper in an editorial last September in the *Daily Nebraskan*, the student newspaper of the University of Nebraska. Kieper, who never shied from debate when conservative principles were at stake, wanted readers to know that the nanny state wasn't going to dictate to him about wearing a seatbelt. "There seems to be a die-hard group of non-wearers out there who simply do not wish to buckle up no matter what the government does," he boasted. "I belong to this group."

You know how this ends, right? Kieper was pitched from the back seat of an SUV when it hit a patch of ice on Interstate 80. He died. Two other passengers, who were wearing seatbelts, survived. According to the *Lincoln Journal Star*, Kieper was widely liked and is bitterly missed.

—Dave Mulcahey



# Distortion 101

In spite of the facts, Bush's Department of Health and Human Services keeps pushing abstinence. By Steve Yoder

JUST AS CHILDREN TAKE cues from their parents, community programs look to the examples set by their funders. At the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), a key lesson being taught is that manipulation and distortion of science is fine as long as it promotes chastity.

The creators of the abstinence-only programs that HHS funds have learned the lesson well. In December, Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) released a House committee analysis showing that 11 of the 13 abstinence-only curricula that the committee reviewed contained "false, misleading, or distorted information about reproductive health." For example, some of the curricula teach that mental health problems are a consequence of sexual activity and that touching another person's genitals can result in pregnancy. Another incorrectly claims that it is unknown whether using condoms prevents HIV.

Those distortions mirror HHS' own approach to studying whether taxpayer-funded efforts to promote virginity until marriage actually achieve anything. In 1998, the agency funded a large, rigorous study of abstinence-only programs. The study's first report, published in February 2002, provided information on the programs' delivery of promised services and reached a positive verdict. That first report stated that a second report in spring 2003 would provide the initial information about what really matters: the programs' effectiveness in changing teen behavior.

That second report is almost two years overdue, and the HHS press office will not comment on its status. An agency official closely involved in the study, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, confirmed that the report was completed and delivered to the department by the contractor responsible for preparing it, but would not say how long it has been under review at HHS.

More importantly, the official confirms what has long been suspected by reproductive health experts: HHS is changing the study measures midway through the project. "Information on behavioral outcomes will not be included in this [second] report," says the official. Instead, it will report on changes in "attitudes, values, knowledge, and relationship kinds of things." Asked about the first report's promise that the second report would include data on "near-term behavioral choices," the official could not provide an explanation: "I'm really not positive about [what's meant by] 'near-term behavioral choices' ... you know what—I'm not actually sure."

But the meaning seems plain enough. "I would be curious about why they are leaving out the most important point of the evaluation," says David Landry, senior research associate at the Alan Guttmacher Institute, which conducts reproductive health research. "One can only speculate that the evaluation shows that the effects [of these programs] are moderate."

The change in the focus of the study suggests the agency applies a different standard to abstinence-only programs than





it does to its others. In its 2004 budget, for example, the Bush administration cut 40 percent of the funding for a Clinton-era after-school program after a single study indicated that the participants' grades did not improve.

Reproductive health advocates are concerned about the pass being given to abstinence-only programs. "Our take on it is that they're changing the measures so that they have more of the outcomes that the administration is looking for," says Tamara Kreinin, head of the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States. "We think if you ask a fifth-grader if they intend to delay sexual activity, they're going to say yes. We would frankly hope they're going to say yes. What we're really interested in is, 'Does a program delay initiation of sex?'"

The most recent studies indicate that, for abstinence-only programs, the answer is no. In September 2004, Advocates for Youth, which supports access to sex education, issued a report on 10 states' recent evaluations of their own abstinence-only programs. Of the 10 evaluations, five measured changes in teens' long-term sexual behavior (three to 17 months after the program ended). None of the five showed any impact on reducing long-term behavior. Of the six evaluations that reported on short-term changes in behavior, three showed no

impact, two showed increases in sexual behavior, and one showed mixed results.

Ironically, if the administration was serious about keeping kids abstinent longer, research has already shown a proven way: investment in sex education. In 2001, for example, the nonpartisan National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy looked at the evaluation results of 250 teen pregnancy prevention programs and found that none of the scientifically evaluated abstinence-only programs had delayed teens' initiation of sex. By contrast, almost a third of the scientifically evaluated sex education programs showed that those programs had delayed initiation. Keep in mind that delaying initiation is only one goal of sex education programs; they are equally focused on keeping kids safe if they choose to have sex (a task that abstinence-only programs decline to address entirely).

Curiously, President George W. Bush's support for the abstinence-only approach dissolves when he visits countries where chastity promotion alone would be catastrophic. In June 2003, on a visit to Uganda, he congratulated the government for its successful AIDS prevention effort, specifically mentioning its promotion of condom use as an effective strategy. ■

**STEVE YODER** is a freelance journalist based in Willow, New York

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**E**VEN AFTER A two-day snowstorm pummeled Chicago in late January, the parking lot of the Trinity United Church of Christ (TUCC) was full. Congregants of the African American church on the city's South Side braved the icy weather to hear a fiery Sunday morning sermon delivered by the church's senior pastor, Reverend Dr. Jeremiah Wright. Since 1972, the 63-year-old Wright has been at the helm of TUCC, a church with 8,500 active members and a strong commitment to faith and social justice.

When U.S. Senator Barack Obama delivered his victory speech on November 2, he gave thanks to Wright and to his fellow Trinitarians. Obama—who has said that his politics are informed by “an ongoing conversation with God”—publicly affirmed his faith about 16 years ago when he heeded Wright's altar call at TUCC. Wright and Obama developed a close relationship in the intervening years, and Obama counts the Reverend among his spiritual advisers. When a reporter asked Wright what advice he would give Obama upon election to the Senate, Wright said, “My advice to him: Please stay the same as you've been ever since I've known you.”

Wright's ministry is firmly rooted in the history of Africa, the lessons of the civil rights movement and a commitment to strengthening black communities. The congregation officially adopted the motto “unashamedly black, and unapologetically Christian” shortly after Wright became pastor. TUCC's mission statement invokes pride in the heritage of its members and a commitment to the liberation of the oppressed and “all of God's family.”

“I don't know how you can do ministry without having social justice as a piece of what you are doing,” says Wright, who was influenced in his early years by his parents' commitment to social action. Wright earned a B.A. and M.A. from Howard University, an M.A. from the University of Chicago and a doctorate in divinity from the United Theological Seminary, where he studied with Samuel DeWitt Proctor, a mentor to Martin Luther King.

Wright quotes Matthew when describing TUCC's vision: “Jesus says, ‘As you've done to the least of these, you've done to me.’”

“[Each of] the ministries of our church address some of that Jesus agenda,” Wright says. Under his leadership, TUCC members can get involved with more than 50 ministries, including those dedicated to supporting people affected by HIV/AIDS, victims of domestic violence and the un- and underemployed. TUCC also houses a community computer center and offers numerous educational opportunities for youth and adults in the congregation. Reverend Wright's “brain-child” ministry is called “Million for the Master.” Based in name and spirit on the Million Man March, it “exists to implement programs and services that promote the spiritual, economic, social and political viability of the African American community.”

On that snowy Sunday, Wright's sermon—accented by music and dance—was joyful, contemplative, educational and political. He wove world affairs, including the war in Iraq and the crisis in Sudan, into his address, and preached about the enduring racism in America, and the continuing income gap between African Americans and whites.

“Don't confuse your ‘bling-bling’ with your blessings,”

# Keeping the Faith

By Emily Udell

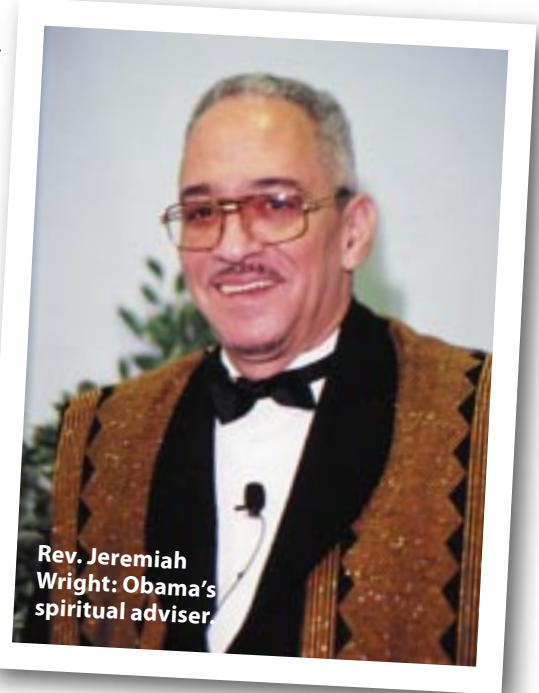
Wright counseled. “Don't try to *impress* your oppressors.” One of the precepts of TUCC's 12-Point Black Value System, established by the congregation in 1981, is the “disavowal of the pursuit of ‘middle-classness.’”

“The concept of ‘middle class’ is divisive for African Americans,” Wright says. “You're buying into a hierarchic notion of who God's people are. There's a very big difference between being ‘middle class’ and being middle income.”

From the pulpit of TUCC's 2,700-seat sanctuary, Wright, who has been outspoken in his opposition to the war in Iraq, wonders why the government doesn't spend as much money fighting disease as it does on the war on terrorism. In conversation, he questions the “moral values” of the current administration: “When you lie about weapons of mass destruction, that's a moral value,” he says. “People weren't voting on moral values. They were voting on fear, and they were voting on ignorance.”

But neither Republicans nor Democrats, Wright believes, benefit from the current political polarization. And while he doesn't think that the people of a democracy can ever stand behind a unified set of “moral values,” he thinks there is common ground to be found between the sides and that it can be sought respectfully.

“In a democracy we need to learn how to disagree without breaking up our house and getting a divorce,” he says. “We need to learn how to be unified in terms of nobody should go to bed hungry, nobody should die unnecessarily.” ■



Rev. Jeremiah Wright: Obama's spiritual adviser

Visit In These Times' radio show, “Fire on the Prairie” ([www.fireontheprairie.com](http://www.fireontheprairie.com)) for audio from an interview with Rev. Wright.



# III Communication

**C**RITICS SAY MAGAZINES LIKE THIS ONE NEVER print any good news about the Bush administration. Here's some: Michael Powell is leaving the FCC.

Powell exits the Federal Communications Commission as perhaps both the best-known and most-despised chairman in history. The disdain Powell showed for average citizens was rivaled only by his enthusiasm for fraternizing with industry insiders.

But in a tenure marked by cocksureness and ineptitude, Powell's greatest accomplishment—besides keeping children safe from Janet Jackson's nipple—may be inadvertently awakening a media reform movement.

The policies he put forward were tailor-made for the media moguls, most notably the June 2003 ruling to allow one company to own stations reaching up to 45 percent of U.S. households and control up to three television stations, eight radio stations and the daily newspaper in a single market.

The public response to Powell's plan was swift and angry. Three million people contacted Congress and the FCC to oppose the new regulations. But Powell didn't get it, decrying "a concerted grassroots effort to attack the commission from the outside in."

The House and Senate moved to block the new ownership rules (ultimately compromising with the White House on a 39 percent nationwide cap that conveniently allowed Fox and Viacom to keep all of their stations). In June 2004, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals threw out the rules (except the new 39 percent cap) and ordered the commissioners to come up with a new plan that didn't "abandon logic and reality."

The level of public awareness and enthusiasm for media issues, unthinkable a few years ago, hasn't dissipated. Issues of media bias—like Sinclair Broadcast Group's anti-Kerry efforts or the taxpayer-funded payola given to pundit Armstrong Williams—especially resonate. In fact, recent surveys of the membership of MoveOn and the progressive group True Majority rank media reform as a top priority, second only to fixing the electoral system.

Media reformers will have their hands full in the coming months, with a series of major decisions expected at the FCC even before Powell steps down in March. On January 27, the FCC decided not to appeal the decision rejecting the ownership rules to the Supreme Court, meaning they must restart the entire rulemaking process. February could bring major decisions at the commission about the digital transition of television, including how

many of the newly available broadcast channels cable providers will be required to carry.

A key issue in the digital transition is what happens to the portion of the public airwaves being vacated by the TV broadcasters. The Media Access Project, New America Foundation, Free Press and other groups are pushing to preserve at least half of this bandwidth as "unlicensed spectrum"—meaning it could be used by anyone for wireless broadband Internet service at super high speeds.

More than 15,000 letters have been sent by media reformers to the White House, asking President Bush to appoint someone as Powell's successor who will "defend the public interest and promote a more democratic media system." But right now the leading candidate is Republican FCC Commissioner Kevin J. Martin—who wouldn't need Senate confirmation. Martin is a hardliner on indecency with close industry ties. According to the Center for Public Integrity, he held more private meetings with broadcasters in advance of the 2003 ownership rulemaking than any other commissioner. Martin is friendly with the White House—where his wife, a former top aide to Dick Cheney, works as a special assistant to the president on economic policy.

Another leading contender for Powell's job is Becky Armendariz Klein, the former head of the Public Utility Commission of Texas. When lobbyists from SBC, Verizon, AT&T and elsewhere got word last fall that she was on the FCC shortlist, they poured money into her sinking congressional campaign, even though they admitted she stood little chance against incumbent Democratic Rep. Lloyd Doggett. "Washington is about getting in early," one executive told the *New York Times*. "That's the way the game is played."

Other names that have popped up include Michael Gallagher, who handles spectrum issues at the Department of Commerce; Earl Comstock, a top aide to Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), the new chairman of the Senate committee with oversight of the FCC; and Pat Wood, chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), who was considered for FCC chairman in 2001. A Ken Lay crony who also once headed the Public Utility Commission of Texas, Wood may be a tough sell because of his disastrous performance at FERC in response to the Enron scandal. Then again, job performance didn't exactly disqualify Alberto Gonzales or Condi Rice from getting promotions.

Michael Powell won't be missed. But when you remove a lightning rod, you'd better be prepared for a shock. ■

Powell's greatest accomplishment—besides keeping children safe from Janet Jackson's nipple—may be inadvertently awakening a media reform movement.

**CRAIG AARON** is the communications director of the national media reform group Free Press ([www.freepress.net](http://www.freepress.net)) and a Senior Editor of *In These Times*. The views expressed here are his own.





## Viewpoint *By Cynthia L. Cooper*

# Dems: Because They Can?

Kerry told a group of progressives that Democrats should be permitted more latitude in supporting the anti-abortion line.

**I**N A MOMENT OF MORNING-AFTER MADNESS, politicians within the Democratic Party are taking three giant steps backward from a woman's right to choose. The results could be disastrous for progressive women's political base.

Much of the drama is emerging around the normally staid contest for the chair of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), which will be decided by 447 electors on February 12 at a DNC vote in Washington, D.C. All of the candidates for the position now held by Clinton-ally Terry McAuliffe are men, a large number of whom who are using Lincoln's birthday as the opportunity to distance themselves from reproductive freedom. This comes at the time of greatest peril, when one or two anti-abortion appointments to the Supreme Court could upend the right to privacy protected by *Roe v. Wade*.

"What are we," asks Eleanor Smeal, president and founder of the Feminist Majority Foundation, "fair weather friends?" Apparently so.

"We fought like mad to beat back the Republicans," blogged Karen M. White, national political director for EMILY's List, a pro-choice Democratic fundraising machine. "Little did we know that we would have just as much to fear from some within the Democratic Party who seem to be using choice as a scapegoat for our top-of-the-ticket losses."

One of the favored candidates for the DNC chair is former Indiana Rep. Timothy Roemer, who has never found an anti-abortion measure that he didn't like. In his campaign for the position, he called Gloria Feldt, president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, to sweet-talk her, arguing that because he was victorious in a "red" state, he'd be a great leader for the Dems. The implication is party first, women second. Feldt didn't buy it. She called upon Democrats to uphold a commitment to "women's rights and health." NARAL Pro-Choice America also announced a national campaign to defeat Roemer.

But Roemer is not without fans in high places. They include Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California, the pro-choice leader of Democrats in the House of Representatives. And her enthusiasm is shared by her newly selected Senate counterpart, the anti-abortion Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada.

But the cruelest cut may be closer to the heart. Pro-choice former presidential candidate Howard Dean is also a contender for the DNC chair. He alarmed pro-choice activists by stating that the Democratic Party needed to be more "inclusive" of pro-lifers.

Other lesser-knowns are in the mix. For a short while Kate Michelman, the former president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, flirted with running for DNC chair. Also aspiring to the position are former Texas Rep. Martin Frost, former Ohio Democratic Party chairman David Leland, party activist Donnie Fowler, former Denver mayor Wellington Webb, and Simon Rosenberg, founder of the New Democrat Network. Rosenberg also declared that he is "open to pro-lifers," according to an article in *The American Spectator*.

The irony is that pro-choice voters are a powerful base in the Democratic Party. More women (51 percent to 48 percent) voted for Kerry over Bush, according to polling by Lake, Snell, Perry and Associates. And despite the oft-repeated declaration that "moral values" swayed voters, further analysis shows that Iraq, terror and the economy were the driving issues for over 70 percent.

In the post-election atmosphere, everyone is positioning. Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) called for the Democratic Party to hold fast to a woman's right to choose. But Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) took a surprising turn, praising chastity education, asserting that abortion represents a "sad, even tragic, choice," calling for "common ground" with pro-lifers.

The top gun himself may have started the rampage. During the election, Sen. John Kerry did such a lousy job of articulating his position that even campaign volunteers didn't know he was pro-choice. Soon after he lost, Kerry told a group of progressives that Democrats should be permitted more latitude in supporting the anti-abortion line.

It seems as though these guys don't want to take the rap for their losses—a familiar scenario to multitudes of women: A guy loses a fight in a bar, bumbles home and decides to take it out on his girlfriend instead.

Democrats are counting on the notion that women have nowhere else to go. The Greens are wooing women, and even pro-choice Republicans stuck with a hostile anti-abortion platform are gloating, arguing that pro-choice gals who left might as well come back. Fond memories are floated of the suffragists' National Women's Party. But there are few shelters for this type of domestic political violence.

Activists know the radical right isn't interested in "common ground," but rather the obliteration of sexual and individual liberties. If anything were to brand Democrats as losers, the post-election behavior toward women's rights just might do it. ■

**CYNTHIA L. COOPER** is a New York-based journalist. She is the author of several non-fiction books and has written more than 30 plays, including *Women Heroes: Six Plays* from the Women's Project.



# The Persistent Taint

**T**HIS IS THE TIME OF YEAR WHEN THE SUBJECT of race is almost mandatory for a black commentator. The period between King Day in late January and the public recognition of February as Black History Month offers an opportunity to obsess on race without guilt.

I'm tempted to skip the subject, just to confound expectations. But the topic is too serious.

Many white Americans already are convinced the problem of anti-black racism is a relic. The Republican Party encourages this belief because it opposes, on principle, the kinds of compensatory programs needed to mitigate the consequences of racism.

The Democratic Party became an ally of civil rights during the '60s, but has been in slow retreat ever since. Some would say there's a good reason for that backup: LBJ's 1964 election was the last time the Democrats carried the white vote.

The retreat picked up steam during the 2004 campaign, when the Democratic presidential candidate seemed allergic to any direct reference to black folks, the party's most faithful voting bloc. What's more, the issues of most consequence to African-American voters (mass incarceration and its attendant dislocations, soaring rates of unemployment, growing homelessness of black families, lack of medical insurance and care, crumbling schools, etc.), received scant attention in campaign rhetoric.

This lack of attention to racial issues is not just a problem affecting the nation's two major political parties. Race has faded into the background as an issue for most Americans, including progressives.

The masses of African Americans are faring badly. A recent analysis, "State of the Dream 2005," by United for a Fair Economy reveals the depth of the economic crisis in black America. Ultimately, all Americans are paying for the continuing waste of human resources that we blithely countenance, not just in diminished economic growth, but also in increasing civic enmity.

But as denial so pervades our culture, most of us are barely aware of the varied manifestations of slavery's crippling legacy. One current story in the news offers a fine example of this denial process.

Last month, Mississippi authorities arrested Edgar Ray Killen for orchestrating the 1964 abduction and murder of three voting rights volunteers, one of the most infamous episodes in the volatile civil rights struggle four decades ago.

Killen, a 79-year-old preacher and former leader

of the Ku Klux Klan, was formally charged with the murders of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner.

The public mood surrounding this retroactive police action has been downright triumphant. And while I too cheer justice's belated arrival, I fear this rush for self-congratulation has a downside; it serves to strengthen Americans' reluctance to confront our racist present.

In current media accounts, Killen's hometown of Philadelphia, Miss., was identified as an odious symbol of racism for African-Americans. But most of those accounts failed to note that the infamous town was also the launching point for the 1980 campaign of presidential aspirant Ronald Reagan.

Reagan launched his campaign in a rousing speech touting "states' rights," a term that had been a Southern euphemism for white supremacy since the days of the Civil War. His advocacy of states' rights from a podium in Philadelphia, Miss., sent a powerful message to white Southerners.

This symbolic gesture of solidarity with segregationists was part of the GOP's "Southern Strategy," a plan initiated by Richard Nixon in 1968 to attract Southern whites by appealing to their segregationist sentiments and racial biases. But when Reagan died last year, few mainstream accounts mentioned his penchant for racist pandering.

So now, most Americans will consume media stories about Killen and never learn how the famous murders—and the racist spirit they symbolized—helped transform segregationist Dixiecrats into Republicans.

It's easier to cheer Killen's arrest than to examine how the GOP's cynical plan to exploit Southern racism succeeded. The current Republican strategy to carve a national electorate out of conservative red states is deeply indebted to the "Southern Strategy." By pandering to persistent biases, exacerbating cultural divisions between so-called "common folk" and the "pointy-headed" liberals who control the Democratic Party, and disparaging "welfare state" government programs, today's GOP is replicating Nixon's tactics.

Few progressive analysts have weighed in on this point. Even Tom Frank—whose book *What's the Matter with Kansas* is one of the most insightful examinations of the GOP ascendancy on the market—gives race short shrift.

In a society dependent for so long on racial slavery and color hierarchy, racist attitudes have become so deeply embedded they are easily ignored. Even during Black History Month. ■

Race has faded into the background as an issue for most Americans, including progressives.

**SALIM MUWAKKIL** is a senior editor at *In These Times*, a contributing columnist to the *Chicago Tribune* and a *Crime and Communities Media Fellow* of the *Open Society Institute*.

# Freedom from Reality

By Robert Parry



ONE OF THE MOST TROUBLING crises confronting the world today is that the U.S. executive branch—controlling the most fearsome arsenal in history—has largely detached itself from reality and faces no counterforce in Washington capable of bringing it back down to earth.

In that sense, George W. Bush's second inaugural address on January 20 stood out as a defining moment. Bush wrapped a grim record of presidential abuses—an unprovoked invasion, extraordinary secrecy, tolerance of torture and indefinite imprisonments without trial—in the noble cloak of “freedom” and “liberty,” words he uttered 27 and 15 times respectively, as if words can amend truth.

Bush's speech also ignored the fact that he and his supporters have consistently harassed and denigrated dissidents at home, often by tarring them as disloyal or crazy. Remember, for instance, the vicious attacks from the right against former Vice President Al Gore in fall 2002 when he questioned the justification for rushing to war with Iraq.

This hostility toward dissent has continued to the present as some conservative pundits, such as the *Washington Times*' Tony Blankley, are suggesting that journalist Sey-

mour Hersh be investigated for espionage for writing an article in *The New Yorker* about the Bush administration's secret military operations in Iran and elsewhere.

“Federal prosecutors should review the information disclosed by Mr. Hersh to determine whether or not his conduct falls within the proscribed conduct of the [espionage] statute,” Blankley wrote.

## Professed love

Bush's professed love for democratic principles also appears to be stronger when he's lecturing other countries abstractly rather than when he's actually practicing the civics lessons at home. Four days after what he called his inaugural “freedom speech,” there was an ill-timed reminder of Bush's personal double standards about democracy.

The *Washington Post*'s Al Kamen updated readers on the career moves of the Republican activists who served as Bush's street thugs during the Florida recount battle of four years ago. On November, 22, 2000, in what became known as the “Brooks Brothers Riot”—named for the preppie clothing of the rioters—Bush operatives stormed Miami's polling headquarters, pounded on doors and roughed up Democrats, leading

city officials to abandon the counting of more than 10,000 ballots.

Though supposedly a protest by local citizens outraged over how the recount was being conducted, many of the participants were identified in a photo as Republican congressional staffers and Bush campaign workers who had been sent in to disrupt the vote counts. After the riot, the Bush campaign threw a celebratory party that featured crooner Wayne Newton singing “Danke Schoen.” The rioters also got a personal thank-you call from Bush and Dick Cheney.

“Some of those pictured [in the riot photo] have gone on to other things, including stints at the White House,” Kamen wrote. “For example, Matt Schlapp, a former House aide and then a Bush campaign aide, has risen to be White House political director.”

Though Bush's disruptive tactics in November 2000 delayed or obstructed local recounts, the Florida Supreme Court ordered a statewide recount in early December. But Bush did not sit back and meekly accept the will of the voters. Instead, he sent his lawyers to the U.S. Supreme Court, where he got five Republican allies to block the recount and hand him the presidency.





# A compliant press allows Bush to spin an inaugural yarn of abstract nonsense.

An unofficial recount, later done by news organizations, found that if all legal votes had been counted in Florida, Al Gore—not George W. Bush—would have become president of the United States.

## More bare knuckles

In campaign 2004, Bush again demonstrated the Bush family's bare-knuckled approach to politics.

As in other George Bush campaigns—by both father and son—there was the usual litany of dirty tricks and front-group smear operations, this time including a well-coordinated assault on John Kerry's Vietnam War heroism.

Other Bush campaign tactics were designed to suppress the Democratic vote, especially in African-American neighborhoods, by adopting aggressive "ballot security" procedures and through the creation of long voting lines.

Defeated candidate Kerry said the tactics suppressed the votes of "thousands" of Americans. "Voting machines were distributed in uneven ways," Kerry said on January 18. "In Democratic districts, it took people four, five, 11 hours to vote, while Republicans [went] through in 10 minutes."

## Fawning commentary

Despite this old and new history of Bush's highhanded approach toward democracy, media commentators largely accepted Bush's inaugural declarations about "freedom" and "liberty" at face value.

Though some columnists have questioned the feasibility of Bush's "ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world," almost no one in Washington has questioned Bush's sincerity. The idea that Bush might be a hypocrite—hiding an autocratic reality under the cover of democratic rhetoric—is presumably beyond the bounds of the capital's conventional wisdom.

The *Washington Post's* David S. Broder, known as the "dean" of the national press corps, wrote a glowing tribute to Bush's "eloquent" speech. The speech, Broder wrote, was proof that Bush was holding steadfast to his goal of achieving "the worldwide realization of the ideals of freedom and democracy."

Left out of these formulations are always the core questions about what "freedom," "liberty" and "democracy" mean to Bush and his political allies overseas. Indeed, the most troubling subtext tucked inside Bush's paean to "freedom" may have been that the ultimate freedom for Americans today is their freedom to follow him.

While justifying the invasion of Iraq in the name of "freedom"—after earlier claims about weapons of mass destruction proved bogus—Bush has based many of his military operations in Persian Gulf sheikhdoms that offer few or no democratic rights to their citizens. Some allies in Bush's "war on terror," such as Uzbekistan, repress their own people as ruthlessly as Saddam Hussein did in Iraq.

For good reason, this perceived Bush hypocrisy has undercut U.S. strategies for winning "hearts and minds" in the Islamic world. Bush's mistaken interpretation of al Qaeda's motives for waging war—as a hatred for American freedom and a desire to destroy U.S. democracy—further hampers a coherent strategy for prevailing in the Middle East.

As former CIA analyst Michael Scheuer points out in his 2004 book, *Imperial Hubris*, Islamic militants view their attacks against U.S. targets, including the terror strikes on the World Trade Center, as a "defensive jihad" to protect what they view as longstanding U.S. assaults on their land and on their people.

"Their goal is not to wipe out our secular democracy, but to deter us by military means from attacking the things they love,"

including their religion and their territory, Scheuer writes. "Bin Laden et al are not eternal warriors; there is no evidence they are fighting for fighting's sake."

Rather, according to Scheuer, the resistance to the United States is part of what many Muslims view as a principled struggle against a foreign power that has sought to reimpose a form of colonialism on the Arab world. In that sense, al Qaeda's attacks are reprehensible but rational, Scheuer argues.

According to Scheuer, U.S. policies over the past half century have "moved America from being the much-admired champion of liberty and self-government to the hated and feared advocate of a new imperial order, one that has much the same characteristics as nineteenth-century European imperialism: military garrisons; economic penetration and control; support for leaders, no matter how brutal and undemocratic, as long as they obey the imperial power; and the exploitation and depletion of natural resources."

Scheuer, who wrote *Imperial Hubris* under the byline "Anonymous" because he was in the CIA at the time, also views Bush's invasion of Iraq as counterproductive because it confirmed many Islamic suspicions about the United States and its motives.

Still, even with the Iraq policy spinning out of control and Islamic hatred of the United States soaring, Bush and much of the Washington commentariat seem content to continue their long bath in the warm rhetoric of freedom and liberty. They do so even as current and, if Hersh is right, future U.S. wars guarantee more devastation for U.S. soldiers and the people of the Middle East.

The other option would be to take a hard look at longstanding U.S. policies in that region, at legitimate Arab grievances against Washington and at the dangers caused by continued dependence on Middle East oil. That would undoubtedly cause much political pain and confront the nation with some wrenching choices. It is also virtually certain not to happen, at least in the foreseeable future.

Perhaps the one freedom most fundamental to Bush and his many admiring columnists is the freedom from reality. ■

**ROBERT PARRY** broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the '80s for the *Associated Press* and *Newsweek*. His new book, *Secrecy & Privilege: Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq*, can be ordered at [secrecyandprivilege.com](http://secrecyandprivilege.com). A version of this article originally appeared on [Consortiumnews.com](http://Consortiumnews.com).



# Cashing in on Cons

Undercover at the American  
Correctional Association's  
2005 Winter Conference

BY SILJA J.A. TALVI

**I**N 1971, INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST Jessica Mitford attended the 101st Congress of the American Correctional Association (ACA) in Miami Beach. The ACA was founded in 1870 as the National Prison Association by reform-minded wardens who saw promise in the rehabilitation, religious redemption and humane treatment of prisoners. By 1971 they had developed a substantial membership, attracting 2,000 attendees to that year's congress.

In her seminal 1973 book, *Kind and Usual Punishment: The Prison Business*, Mitford reported that the organization had shifted its focus from reforming and rehabilitating prisoners to reaping profit from incarceration. Exhibitors, she wrote, sold everything from tear gas grenades to stun gun prototypes. And with prisons facing costly lawsuits instigated by prisoners, litigation, Mitford wrote, was "very much on everybody's mind."

Thirty years later, how much has changed?

The 2005 winter conference in Phoenix—attended by an estimated 4,000—found the ACA still touting its principles: "Humanity, Justice, Protection, Opportunity, Knowledge, Competence and Accountability." The organization stresses that it brings together individuals and groups "that share a common goal of improving the justice system." But with the prison industry now bringing in annual revenue of \$50 billion, the ACA seems most intent on "improving" profits.

Today's ACA is a sleeker version of the organization Mitford examined, complete with online certification courses for correctional employees (starting at \$29.95) and an expensive prison accreditation process that claims to instill transparency and accountability. Members are enticed to earn accreditation in order to receive up to a 10 percent discount on prison liability insurance (see "A Dubious Distinction").

Keeping litigation costs down is only one way prison corporations profit from incarceration. In addition, for-profit prisons also increase revenues by contracting with other corporations to provide substandard or overpriced services to prisoners. In some states, companies like Microsoft pay prisons to employ prisoners at wages far below market rates.

Taking advantage of the unprecedented prison boom of the late '80s and '90s, prison administrators, politicians, lobbying firms and corporate boards created a prison-industrial complex in which everyone benefits except the prisoners.

In 1980, federal and state prisons incarcer-

ated 316,000 people. In 1990, that number had grown to 740,000, not including jail populations. By 2000, the number of prisoners had surpassed 1.3 million. Prison construction accompanied this growth: More than 1,000 prisons are now in operation, and each new prison comes with a bevy of contracts for construction and services.

The ACA conference is where many of these transactions are cemented.

Noting that the prison population may have reached its apogee, ACA President Gwendolyn C. Chunn told members at the conference, "We'll have a hard time hold-

ing on to what we have now." But attendees seemed more than willing to try; everyone at the conference seemed to be riding high on the promise of growth, expansion and profits.

## Just business

This conference's theme was "Corrections Contributions to a Safer World," and the conference program didn't try to hide the gathering's militaristic bent. The cover of the 201-page ACA booklet featured a soldier with an enormous phallic tank gun, superimposed over the blue planet earth. And ACA's three

# A Dubious Distinction

**"ACCREDITATION IS AWARDED** to the 'best of the best' in the corrections field,'" as the ACA explains on its Web site ([www.aca.org](http://www.aca.org)). "Accredited agencies have a stronger defense against litigation through ... the demonstration of a 'good faith' effort to improve conditions of confinement."

Yet the fact remains that the ACA is still a *private*, non-governmental organization with no authority to change prison conditions or to enforce standards. The ACA's accreditation process is kept secret from the public; all that outsiders know for sure is *which* facilities have been accredited. Today, only 10 percent of government-managed facilities are ACA-accredited, compared with 44 percent of privately managed prisons. Texas leads the pack in prison privatization, followed closely by Florida, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Colorado.

The 22-year-old Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) is both the most successful and the most ACA-accredited pris-

on corporation, managing more than 50 percent of all private prison beds at 63 facilities around the country. Representing the sixth largest prison system in the United States—and racked by controversy, serious prison riots and complaints about poorly trained, low-paid corrections workers—CCA boasts that 75 percent of its facilities have the ACA stamp of approval.

How meaningful is ACA accreditation?

In July 2004, a severe prison riot broke out at the ACA-accredited Crowley County Correctional Facility, a CCA prison near Pueblo, Colo. For nearly six hours, several hundred Colorado and out-of-state prisoners wreaked havoc on the prison, destroying cells, furniture, plumbing and equipment. Prison administrators had continually ignored complaints about food quality, conditions of confinement and the physical abuse of prisoners. At the time of the riot, only 33 guards were watching over 1,122 prisoners. Several of those guards fled the facility in panic. An extensively

detailed 174-page "After Action" report, prepared by the Colorado Department of Corrections, noted CCA's deficiencies and serious errors in running the prison. But CCA retained both its contract to run the prison and its accreditation.

In September 2004, prisoners rioted at Kentucky's Lee Adjustment Center, another CCA-run, ACA-accredited prison. Correctional officers working there make less than \$8.00 an hour, and sometimes work 12-hour shifts.

The government-run Mississippi State Penitentiary, which was taken to court in July 2002 over its filthy, vermin- and mosquito-infested death row cells, is also accredited by the ACA (see "Cruel as Usual," January 19, 2004). So is the Santa Fe County Detention Center, run by the Management and Training Corporation, which faces a federal lawsuit for violations of civil and constitutional rights, including its former practice of mandatory strip searches of every inmate.

—Silja J.A. Talvi



keynote speakers were prominent conservatives or military officers: retired Gen. Anthony Zinni, Michael Durant, the pilot of *Black Hawk Down* fame, and disgraced Homeland Security nominee Bernard Kerik.

The conference was financially supported by private prison giants such as the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), the GEO Group (formerly known as Wackenhut), Correctional Services Corporation (CSC) and Correctional Medical Services (see "Detention Blues," July 5, 2004 for background on CSC). The titles of the dozens of overlapping workshops indicated what the ACA defined as the latest trends in correc-

tions: "Faith-Based Juvenile Programming," "Anti-Terrorism in Correctional Facilities," and "Can't Simply Paint it Pink and Call it a Girl's Program."

One workshop—"Intensive Medical Management: How to Handle Prisoners Who Self-Mutilate, Slime, Starve, Spit and Scratch"—featured footage of a non-violent paranoid schizophrenic in Utah being forcibly extracted from his cell and then tied down to a restraint chair. After being strapped down naked for 16 hours, the delusional prisoner died. The session was facilitated by Todd Wilcox, the medical director of the Salt Lake County Metro Jail, who used the imagery as

an example of how to avoid costly litigation. "Don't get personal with this," Wilcox said. "It's just business." He reminded the audience how important it is to sever the "emotional leash" that guards and nurses can form with inmates. He also referred to some mentally ill patients with "Axis II disorders" as "the people we affectionately call 'the assholes.'"

## Pain for a price

The real draw of the ACA conference was the exhibitors, who had two full days to showcase their wares. The exhibition hall corridors had been given names like "Corrections Corporation of America Court," "Verizon Ex-

# Do You Like Adventure?

## DYNACORP INTERNATIONAL,

A subsidiary of the private prison operator Correctional Services Corporation, was in heavy recruitment mode at the winter ACA Conference.

"The Dawn of Liberty," blared one flier. "Join Us in

travel internationally? In an ever increasing world of tension and instability, the U.S. Government has expanded its role in establishing societal stability through democratic style of governance."

With an "unblemished background," a civilian police officer in Iraq could earn \$120,632, with all lodging, meals, transportation, and logistical and administrative support provided at no cost. The small print on one flier noted that a one-year contract was based on a six-day workweek, 12 hours per day.

For a prison guard making \$12 an hour, this offer seemed mighty tempting. One female corrections officer sat outside the convention center, looking over the materials. "I wonder if it's worth it?" she mused.

An ACA workshop devoted to "Prisons for Iraq" featured ACA Board member Mark Sauder, a former warden in Ohio. In March 2004, he said, he was sent on a "corrections mission" to establish the new Iraqi Corrections Service. His co-presenter was Chuck Ryan, a 25-year Arizona Department of

Corrections (AZDOC) veteran and the top deputy director under former AZDOC Director Terry Stewart. Ryan and Stewart, who ran for president of the ACA in 2004, were known for setting the tone for Arizona's harsh prison system. (Other U.S. correctional administrators and prison guards with questionable histories were sent to Iraq, including Specialist Charles Graner, the Abu Ghraib torturer who was sentenced to 10 years in prison.)

At the workshop, both Sauder and Ryan admitted that by April 2004 the prisons they were sent to oversee "exploded." To repair the damage from ongoing riots—and to control the inmates—the U.S. contractors locked men up, 30 to a cell, some of whom were shown in a slide show at the workshop wearing nothing but white underwear.

Once the renovations were made, Sauder and his peers had to try to instill a new prison culture. "Our mission was to teach Iraqis how to run a humane prison," he said.

Speaking of Abu Ghraib, where he was stationed as part of the team in charge of

setting up the civilian prison system, Sauder said: "Knowing they were not going to be beaten or killed helped inform trust between guards and prisoners."

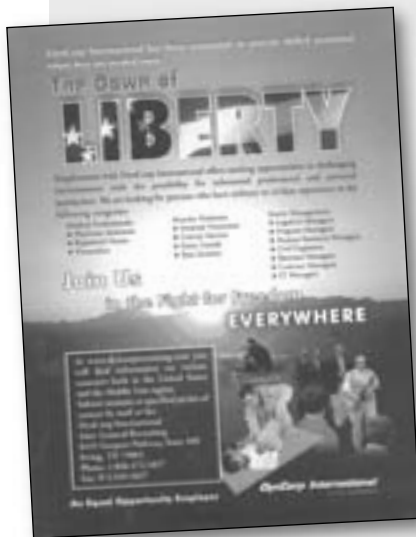
Sauder proceeded to entertain the audience with photos of women visiting their incarcerated husbands, with whom they could only have contact through a metal fence. When the women arrived, "it sounded like a turkey farm," he laughed.

Sauder showed a picture of an Iraqi prisoner dripping with blood. The man had slashed his chest "to get attention." "We knew better than to take this seriously," he said, referring to the common experience of American prisoners who self-mutilate while incarcerated.

One of his most interesting tasks, said Sauder, was to assign the captured Saddam Hussein his official Iraqi Corrections Service number: 005666.

"It's the mark of the Anti-christ," Sauder said of the 666 designation. "If you shaved [Hussein's] head, you would probably see it anyway."

—Silja J.A. Talvi

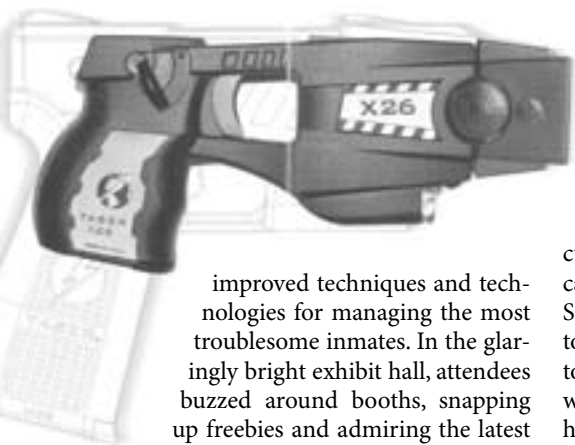


the Fight for Freedom EVERYWHERE."

To get current and former correctional employees to consider "exciting opportunities in the Middle East," DynCorp made working in Iraq sound like a trip with Outward Bound. "Do you like adventure? Do you like to

pressway," "Western Union Avenue," and "The GEO Court Lounge," where one could sip Starbucks and eat free glazed doughnuts.

Here, the discussions were all about increasing profit margins, lessening risks and liabilities, winning court cases, and new,



improved techniques and technologies for managing the most troublesome inmates. In the glaringly bright exhibit hall, attendees buzzed around booths, snapping up freebies and admiring the latest in prison technology.

Exhibitors hawked restraint chairs, tracking systems, drug-detection tools, suicide-prevention smocks and prison facility insurance. Dozens of companies competed to sell private health care sys-

tems, pharmacy plans, commissary services and surveillance systems. Of particular interest were behavior modification programs, juvenile boot camps, and Internet and phone services. Interest in the latter brought in the "big boys" of telecommunications: Sprint, AT&T, NEC, MCI Communications, Verizon, Global Tel\*Link and Qwest. And why not? Prison phone contracts that overcharge prisoners and their families generate an estimated \$1 billion a year.

The range of products went on from one corridor to the next: storage systems, money wiring, surveillance, security transport, fencing and prison medical packages. (Industry giant Prison Health Services brought in rescued owls and hawks to draw crowds. What was the connection to prison health? "Oh, nothing!") Vendors who couldn't afford dog-and-pony shows handed out free bags, pens, toothpicks, mugs, tape measures and sugarcoated *churros*. The exhibitors who didn't need giveaways to draw crowds included weapons manufacturers Smith & Wesson, Glock and Taser International.

Two smiling exhibitors, standing be-

hind the Taser booth, allowed the curious to handle the latest in 50,000-volt stun gun technology. On the Taser table a video looped on a monitor. It depicted a naked African-American man being chased down by police officers. Shot once he's shown falling hard to the ground. Tasered again, his body shudders, before collapsing altogether. The contextless footage was meant to illustrate the efficacy of the stun gun, used by more than 6,000 police departments, that had become the leader in the "non-lethal weapons" industry—that is, before a spate of negative press, including reports of an SEC investigation, had put the company's stock price into a tailspin.

In November 2004, Amnesty International issued a report that blamed at least 74 deaths since 2001 on Tasers and called for a suspension of their use until further studies could prove just how "non-lethal" these weapons were. Headline business news emerged during the ACA conference: Taser executives were reported to have sold \$91.5 million of their own stock, raising suspicions that they sought to maximize their own profits before their product lost ground. The company subsequently

*Continued on page 28*

INCITE! WOMEN OF COLOR AGAINST VIOLENCE PRESENTS  
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# The Axis of Oil

BY JEHANGIR POCHA · BEIJING, CHINA

China and India are locked in an increasingly aggressive wrangle with the United States over the world's most critical economic commodity: **oil**. More than any other issue, this tussle will shape the economic, environmental and geopolitical future of these three countries, and the world.

**Ensuring a steady flow of cheap oil** has always been one of the central goals of U.S. foreign and economic policy, and Washington's preeminent position in the world is based in large measure on its ability to do this. But **China and India are increasingly competing** with the United States to secure oil exploration rights in Africa, Southeast Asia, Central Asia and Latin America.



India has invested more than \$3 billion in global exploration ventures and has said it will continue to spend \$1 billion a year on more acquisitions. China, which has already invested about \$15 billion in foreign oil fields, is expected to spend 10 times more over the next decade.

The motive, says Zheng Hongfei, an energy researcher at the Beijing Institute of Technology, is that "there is just not enough oil in the world" to cover China's and India's growing energy needs.

By 2010 India will have 36 times more cars than it did in 1990. China will have 90 times more, and by 2030 it will have more cars than the United States, according to the Energy Research Institute of Beijing.

More than 4.5 million new vehicles are expected to hit Chinese roads this year alone, a far cry from the time when families saved for months to buy a Flying Pigeon bicycle. The country is now the world's largest oil importer after the United States, guzzling about 6.5 million barrels of oil a day; this figure will double by 2020, says Stephen Roach, chief economist at Morgan Stanley.

India, the world's second-fastest growing economy after China, now consumes about 2.2 million barrels a day—about the same as South Korea—and this is expected to rise to 5.3 million barrels a day by 2025, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

With global oil production barely 1 million barrels over the global consumption



rate of 81 million barrels a day, the surge in demand from China and India could eventually lead global demand to outstrip supply, causing fuel prices to shoot up beyond their recent highs of around \$56 a barrel, says Roach.

The impact of this on the global economy, particularly in developing countries that import most of their fuel, would be severe. The International Energy Agency says that for every \$1 increase in oil price, the global economy loses \$25 billion.

Anxiety over this is already throwing the nervous oil market into further disequilibrium. In September, Michael Rothman, a senior energy analyst at Merrill Lynch, said rising oil prices were not so much a result of the Iraq war or political instability in Venezuela and Sudan, but of extensive "hoarding" by China.

According to Rothman's analysis, China and India are roiling oil markets by creating oil reserves, which are designed to provide the minimum cache the country needs to ride out a crisis, along the lines of the United States' Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR).

With both countries flush with foreign exchange reserves that are threatening to infect their economies with inflation, creating an oil stock seems a sensible solution. But critics say Beijing's and New Delhi's timing is unfortunate, coming just as the global economy seemed to be recovering and the United States was questioning the value of its own reserve.

At 175 million barrels and 25 million barrels respectively, China's and India's estimated oil reserves are just a small fraction of the 700 million barrels held by the United States in its SPR.

China and India, which are both nuclear states, are also taking advantage of the United States' strained ties with Iran, Vietnam and Myanmar by extending these countries military and political support in exchange for energy supplies. And a Washington preoccupied with Iraq, the war on terror and nuclear crises in Iran and North Korea has been unable to checkmate either country as successfully as it did earlier.

For example, U.S. nervousness over China's intentions in Latin America had led it to use its leverage with Panama to impede China's access to the all-important canal connecting the Pacific and Atlantic. But in December, Beijing signed a landmark deal with Venezuela and its neighbor Colombia, under whose terms a pipeline would be constructed linking Venezuelan oil fields to ports along Colombia's Pacific coastline.

This will allow Venezuelan oil to bypass the Panama Canal and create a new and direct route to China.

There are also signs that China is warming to the idea of a Russia-China-India axis, which, in cooperation with Iran, would turn the oil-rich Central Asian region into their domain. This proposal would put in place extensive military agreements and pipeline networks. Originally put forward by Russia's Asia-centric ex-Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, the proposal seems to be gaining ground with all four nations. China and India have already signed multibillion-dollar gas and energy deals with Russia, which is the largest arms supplier to both countries, and with ex-Soviet Central Asian republics such as Kazakhstan.

U.S.," says Zheng, the energy researcher at Beijing Institute of Technology.

Yet the sheer size of the Asian juggernauts and the prospect that they might indiscriminately swallow global resources scare economic planners.

State-owned Indian and Chinese oil companies are investing heavily in local energy fields, such as the 200,000-square-mile Ordos Basin that stretches across the provinces of Shaanxi, Shanxi, Gansu, Ningxia and Inner Mongolia in northwestern China, and is reported to have oil reserves of up to 60 billion barrels.

To defray the substantial costs of exploration, both China and India are privatizing state-owned oil companies, and using the billions raised to restructure and modernize

## Increasing demand for oil by China and India could send fuel prices skyrocketing.

What worries Western powers most are China's and India's growing ties with Iran, a country Washington is trying to isolate. Both Beijing and New Delhi have recently signed 25-year gas and oil deals with Iran that are collectively valued at between \$150 and \$200 billion, and both countries are also deepening their military cooperation with Tehran. Iran and India conducted their first-ever joint naval exercises last September, and India has agreed to modernize Iran's aging Russian-built Kilo-class submarines and MiG fighters.

Both China and India have also tried to thwart Western attempts to curtail Iran's nuclear program, which has largely been built with Russian assistance. In a departure from China's traditional neutrality on international issues that do not involve its own interests, Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing flew to Tehran last November when the United States threatened to haul Iran before the U.N. Security Council and announced that China would oppose any such effort. And in January, the State Department imposed penalties against some of China's largest weapons manufacturers for their support of Iran's ballistic missile program.

The potential volatility from such aggressive oil politics could bring China and India into conflict with Western, Japanese and other regional interests, says Robert Karniol, the Asia-Pacific editor of *Jane's Defence Weekly*.

"Even if China's oil consumption doubles by 2020, it will still only be half that of the

their operations. Other public sector oil units are also undergoing massive recapitalization and restructuring, including the retrenchment of thousands of workers.

Sharon Hurst, a Beijing-based executive with ConocoPhillips, the largest refiner in the United States, says, "Western investment is helping Chinese oil companies morph into world-class players."

Significantly, both nations are also opening up their domestic oil industries—previously considered strategic and therefore off limits to foreign and private investors. Companies such as ExxonMobil, which owns a 19 percent stake in China's giant Sinopec company, are being wooed not just for their capital but also for their refining and marketing capabilities. For example, ExxonMobil is helping Sinopec establish more than 500 gas stations across the country and build at least two refineries in southern China.

Optimists—mostly people from the corporate world such as Warren Buffet—say such common opportunity will lead to greater cooperation rather than competition between the West and China and India. But pessimists—mostly people from the security establishment—fear that China and India, two energy-hungry giants seeking access to limited world resources, will inevitably clash with the West. ■

**JEHANGIR POCHA** is the Asia correspondent for *In These Times*.

**BY BILL MOYERS**



# BLIND FAITH

**O**NE OF THE BIGGEST CHANGES IN POLITICS IN MY lifetime is that the delusional is no longer marginal. It has come in from the fringe, to sit in the seat of power in the Oval Office and in Congress.

For the first time in our history, ideology and theology hold a monopoly of power in Washington. Theology asserts propositions that cannot be proven true; ideologues hold stoutly to a worldview despite being contradicted by what is generally accepted as reality. The offspring of ideology and theology are not always bad but they are always blind. And that is the danger: voters and politicians alike, oblivious to the facts.

Remember James Watt, President Reagan's first secretary of the interior? Watt told the U.S. Congress that protecting natural resources was unimportant in light of the imminent return of Jesus Christ. In public testimony he said, "After the last tree is felled, Christ will come back."

Beltway elites snickered. The press corps didn't know what he was talking about. But Watt was serious, as were his compatriots across the country. One-third of the American electorate, if a recent Gallup Poll is accurate, believes the Bible is literally true. This past November, several million good and decent citizens went to the polls believing in what is known as the "rapture index."

These true believers subscribe to a fantastical theology concocted in the 19th century by a couple of immigrant preachers who took disparate passages from the Bible and wove them into a narrative that has captivated the imagination of millions of Americans. Its outline is rather simple, if bizarre: Once Israel has occupied the rest of its "biblical lands," legions of the Antichrist will attack it, triggering a final showdown in the valley of Armageddon. As the Jews who have not been converted are burned, the messiah will return for the rapture. True believers will be lifted out of their clothes and transported to heaven, where, seated next to the right hand of God, they will watch

their political and religious opponents suffer plagues of boils, sores, locusts and frogs during the several years of tribulation that follow.

I've reported on these people, following some of them from Texas to the West Bank. They are sincere, serious and polite as they tell you they feel called to help bring the rapture on as fulfillment of biblical prophecy. That is why they have declared solidarity with Israel and the Jewish settlements and backed up their support with money and volunteers. That is why the invasion of Iraq for them was a warm-up act, predicted in the Book of Revelations, where four angels "which are bound in the great river Euphrates will be released to slay the third part of man." For them a war with Islam in the Middle East is something to be welcomed—an essential conflagration on the road to redemption. The rapture index—"the prophetic speedometer of end-time activity"—now stands at 153 ([www.raptureready.com/rap2.html](http://www.raptureready.com/rap2.html)).

So what does this mean for public policy and the environment? As Glenn Scherer reports in the online environmental journal *Grist*, millions of Christian fundamentalists believe that environmental destruction is not only to be disregarded but hastened as a sign of the coming apocalypse.

We're not talking about a handful of fringe lawmakers who hold or are beholden to these beliefs. Nearly half of the members of Congress are backed by the religious right. Forty-five senators and 186 members of the 108th Congress earned 80 to 100 percent approval ratings from the three most influential Christian-right advocacy groups. They include Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, Assistant Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Conference Chair Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania, Policy Chair Jon Kyl of Arizona, House Speaker Dennis Hastert and Majority Whip Roy Blunt. The only Democrat to score 100 percent with the Christian Coalition was Sen. Zell Miller of Georgia, who before his recent retirement quoted from the biblical Book of Amos on the Senate floor: "The days will come, sayeth the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land." He seemed to relish the thought.

## Onward Christian soldiers

And why not? There's a constituency for it. A 2002 Time/CNN poll found that 59 percent of Americans believe that the prophecies found in the Book of Revelations are going to come true. Tune in to any of the more than 1,600 Christian radio stations or flip on one of the 250 Christian TV stations across the country and you can hear some of this end-time gospel. And you will come to understand why people under the spell of such potent prophecies cannot be expected, as *Grist* puts it, "to worry about the environment. Why care about the earth when the droughts, floods, famine and pestilence brought by ecological collapse are signs of the apocalypse foretold in the Bible?"

These people believe that until Christ does return, the Lord will provide. One of their texts is a high school history book, *America's Providential History*, which contains the following: "The secular or socialist has a limited resource mentality and views the world as a pie ... that needs to be cut up so everyone can get a piece." However, "[t]he Christian knows that the potential in God is unlimited and that there is no shortage of resources in God's earth ... while many secularists view the world as overpopulated, Christians know that God has made the earth sufficiently large with plenty of resources to accommodate all of the people." No wonder Karl Rove goes

around the White House whistling that militant hymn, "Onward Christian Soldiers." He turned out millions of the foot soldiers in this past election, including many who have made the apocalypse a powerful driving force in modern American politics.

Once upon a time I thought that people would protect the natural environment when they realized its importance to their health and to the health and lives of their children. Now I am not so sure. It's not that I don't want to believe that—it's just that I read the news and connect the dots.

## Immoral imagination

Mike Leavitt, the former administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, declared the election a mandate for President Bush on the environment—a mandate for an administration that wants to rewrite the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act, as well as the National Environmental Policy Act, which requires the government to judge beforehand if actions might damage natural resources.

Millions of Christian fundamentalists believe that environmental destruction is not only to be disregarded but hastened as a sign of the coming apocalypse.

The Environmental Protection Agency had even planned to spend \$9 million—\$2 million of it from the administration's friends at the American Chemistry Council—to pay poor families to continue to use pesticides in their homes. These pesticides have been linked to neurological damage in children, but instead of ordering an end to their use, the government and the industry were going to offer the families \$970 each, as well as a camcorder and children's clothing, to serve as guinea pigs for the study.

I read all this and then look at the pictures on my desk, next to the computer—pictures of my grandchildren: Henry, age 12; Thomas, age 10; Nancy, 7; Jassie, 3; Sara Jane, nine months. I see the future looking back at me from those photographs and I say, "Father, forgive us, for we know not what we do." And then I am stopped short by the thought: "That's not right. We do know what we are doing. We are stealing their future. Betraying their trust. Despoiling their world."

And I ask myself: "Why? Is it because we don't care? Because we are greedy? Because we have lost our capacity for outrage, our ability to sustain indignation at injustice?"

What has happened to our moral imagination?

The news is not good these days. I can tell you that as a journalist I know the news is never the end of the story. The news can be the truth that sets us free—free to fight for the future we want. And the will to fight is the antidote to despair, the cure for cynicism, and the answer to those faces looking back at me from those photographs on my desk.

What we need is what the ancient Israelites called "hocma"—the science of the heart, the capacity to see, to feel and then to act as if the future depended on you. Believe me, it does. ■

**BILL MOYERS** is the president of the Schumann Center for Media and Democracy. This article was adapted from a speech, posted on [TomPaine.com](http://TomPaine.com), which Moyers gave on December 1 upon accepting Harvard Medical School's Global Environment Citizen award.



From Sundance:  
Eugene Jarecki's  
*Why We Fight*

BY PAT AUFDERHEIDE

## Docs Rock Sundance

"We're 21, which is usually thought of as the age of consent," Robert Redford said at the opening of the Sundance Film Festival. "But I like to think of us as a festival about dissent." Dissent and diversity, two of the mantras of the Sundance

Film Festival, were in full flush during the hectic first week of the 10-day festival.

The festival may have burgeoned into a megamarketing spectacle, with companies from Turning Leaf wines to Volkswagen figuring out how to maximize their presence. But it's still a place where independence of thought, difference of opinion and innovation in getting these qualities before audiences are prized. This year was an excellent one for politically and socially critical documentaries. Not only did engrossing and challenging work get shown to sold-out theaters, dealmakers of all kinds were competing to purchase them for theatrical distribution.

Expect to see, for instance, Alex Gibney's *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room* in theaters within a couple of months. *Enron* chronicles the implosion of

the world's largest energy company from corruption so large-scale that it was simply unimaginable to Wall Street insiders. Gibney (who earlier made *The Trials of Henry Kissinger* with Eugene Jarecki) follows the story from the inside, seizing upon the company's slogan, "Ask Why." The question he asks: How did ordinary people who thought of themselves as decent and responsible go along with ever-larger fraud?

"Enron is important because it's not the exception to the rule," said Gibney at Sundance. "It's an exaggeration—and maybe not enough of one—of the way things too often work."

You're also probably going to get to see *Why We Fight*, by Jarecki, in theaters in the spring. Yes, that title is drawn from Frank Capra's celebrated WWII propaganda series, and so are some clips in the film.



But the heart of this aggressively argued essay is in the first sequence, when President Dwight Eisenhower warns, in his farewell address, of the military-industrial complex. Jarecki argues that corporate greed drives compliant legislators and a self-interested military to foment war. The Iraq war, he argues, is the tragic result.

He also asks: How do good people become part of the problem, and what wakes them up? A female lieutenant colonel, part of the military's public relations machinery, finally balks at passing along required boilerplate on WMD that she knows is erroneous. A grieving father who asks for his son's name to be written on a piece of ordnance does an about-face when he realizes he has been lied to by the president. On the other hand, two fighter pilots who were the first to bomb Baghdad with "precision" bombs that killed civilians remain proud of their role in launching the war.

"The question before us now," said Jarecki over lunch at Sundance, "is: Is this the way we want to live? And each of us has to ask that question, because it's now up to us to provide direction to our leaders."

Both Jarecki and Gibney hope that after they're in theaters, their films will show on television, with luck on a broadcast channel, one with more viewers than the teeny-audience Sundance Channel, where *The Trials of Henry Kissinger* played. But they're prepared for the possibility that politically sensitive arguments are a tough sell—especially for American public television, where the culture wars never end.

That's why it's heartening to see that *The Education of Shelby Knox*, another standout among social documentaries at Sundance, is already pledged to the public TV series *P.O.V.*, and thus eventually will be available to 98 percent of the American

public. It's a story for everybody.

Shelby is a good student from an upstanding Republican family in Lubbock, Texas, who became locally notorious when she led a campaign to get sexual education into the high school curriculum. In Texas, the law bans all sexual education except that which deals with abstinence. (Lubbock, it should be noted, has one of the highest teen pregnancy and STD rates in the country.) Veteran documentarians Marion Lipschutz and Rose Rosenblatt track Shelby's school-of-hard-knocks political education, without cheerleading or moralizing. It's a fascinating journey into cultural conservatism, where cognitive dissonance and denial are close friends.

Another public-TV treasure at Sundance was *Shakespeare Behind Bars*, in which Jillann Spitzmiller and Hank Rogerson follow a yearlong process of shaping a performance of *The Tempest* in a Kentucky prison, where the warden says he "hates prisons" and believes that they mostly fail in their rehab mission. The prisoners seize upon the play's theme of redemption, until you believe Shakespeare must have written the play for prison inmates.

Next year will also bring some excellent documentaries to cable subscribers. Marc Levin's *Protocols of Zion* explores anti-Semitism in the wake of 9/11, and was backed by HBO/Cinemax. Jessica Sanders' *After Innocence*, funded by cable channel Showtime and destined for it after theatrical release, features several men whose sentences were dropped—in one case after 23 years in solitary confinement—after DNA or other evidence proved them innocent.

Several of the exonerees attended the festival. "At the screening last night, a prosecutor stood up and apologized on behalf of prosecutors," said soft-spoken Wilton Dedge,

who spent 22 years in prison on false charges. "That meant so much to me. I wish that others had that courage."

And who said that social docs can't be about sex and violence? *Inside Deep Throat*, an HBO-funded project by Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato, recalls the astonishing history of the most popular pornographic film of all time. Whether or not you believe their argument that the 1972 film changed history, you have got to love the story of how the film was launched and received. Distributed entirely outside above-board businesses by the Mob, the film was hand-carried to theaters, with gunsels counting heads and taking cash back at the end of the day. Some of the interviewees in the film still tremble at the thought of retribution for even talking about it. Somehow \$600 million went sloshing around the economy without ever being accounted for.

With companies like Docurama and Netflix picking up the pace on distributing and renting out docs on DVD, it seems to be getting easier to see

controversial material, if you're home and have equipment. Robert Greenwald also noted in a Sundance panel that with his "Un" series (*Unprecedented*, *Uncovered*, *Unconstitutional*) and *Outfoxed*, Internet-based "viral marketing" sold hundreds of thousands of copies of his films directly to viewers, many of whom expected to watch them with friends and family.


Broadcast and cablecast television continue, however, to be both influential and a bottleneck. The one unequivocal masterpiece at Sundance, *Three Rooms of Melancholia*—a profound meditation on the cost of war by Finnish artist Pirjo Honkasalo—faces an uphill battle to be seen at all, whether on broadcast or in theaters.

Still, filmmakers remained optimistic. At a reception for doc filmmakers, Redford—obviously gloomy about the inaugural events going on simultaneously—paid homage to the role of documentary films today. "You are the guardians of truth-telling," he said. "And we need your stories more than ever." ■

## ART SPACE



**Collateral** (triptych), oil on canvas, by Milwaukee artist Brandon Bauer. Bauer was a contributing editor for the book *Peace Signs: the anti-war movement illustrated*, a collection of posters and graphics from around the world protesting the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. His work has been shown in Paris, New York, Chicago and at the World Social Forum in Mumbai, India.



McLusky in  
Germany, 2002

BY KEVIN CANFIELD

## Comings and Goings

Late last year, word surfaced that the pioneering alt rock band the Wedding Present would release a new record in early 2005, its first in eight years. A bit later, a scrappy young group called McLusky said that it was

calling it quits.

Aside from the fact that they both hail from the United Kingdom—the Wedding Present is English; McLusky, Welsh—and that both have worked with studio mastermind Steve Albini, the two bands have very little in common. One makes deeply earnest records packed with lyrics about failed relationships. The other views life through a thick lens of irony, with song titles like “Without MSG I Am Nothing” and “She Will Only Bring You Happiness.”

But as McLusky departs and the Wedding Present returns, it's worth having a look at the bands' divergent worldviews, if only to be reminded that there are different ways to make compelling music.

David Gedge, the Wedding Present's singer and songwriter, has long been one of British rock's most darkly magnetic figures. Yes, fatalistic lyrics are a perennial indie rock staple, but Gedge was particularly tortured. He was forever phoning ex-lovers, only to be greeted by the men who'd replaced him; he could often be found slumped in a corner watching a woman he cared for storming out of his life; he was never satisfied with an ex's reasons for breaking it off. As he once put it, “I think I'd be more angry, if your answers weren't so daft!”

Though he's stayed active since the band broke up almost a decade ago—making records with the band Cinerama—Gedge's decision to reassemble

the Wedding Present was cause for some trepidation. Would Gedge still be the overgrown, brokenhearted schoolboy he was across a series of Wedding Present records during the late '80s and '90s? And if he were, would he sound silly, a middle-aged man crying out like a teenager?

As it happens, the band's new album, released this month, is not transcendent—but it's pretty strong all the same. Gedge's resistance to a mature worldview has the makings of a disastrous record—he is, after all, a solipsist, a personality type that generally does not age well. But his brand of self-absorption is thoughtful, and he can turn a phrase better than most of his indie rock brethren.

Consider the first single, for example, a song called “Interstate 5.” It's about a woman “just in it for the sex”—he knows she won't remember him a year from now. It plays out against the band's trademark dense wall of guitars and earth-moving percussion. Then it dissolves into a perfect spaghetti western dirge, complete with trumpet and a bit of tambourine. It's a perfect blend of narcissism, frustration and resignation. There is simple beauty here, too. “I'm From Further North Than You” is a mostly quiet song—understated guitar with a generous but not overdone helping of drums—about a relationship that had its high points, “but just not very many.”

If the Wedding Present's music is unrelentingly grave, McLusky's is a blend of angry guitars and a heavy dose of mischief. The band's third—and evidently final—full-length record, “The Difference Between Me And You Is That I'm Not On Fire,” came out in 2004 and contains several songs whose lyrics are pretty much indecipherable.

“That Man Will Not Hang,” the record's second song, opens with a thick dose of bass and lyrics about “a story for a thimble on a dimple on a pea” and a man who “gave away his heart like it was his to give away.” Andy Falkous, the band's singer, shouts his way through the chorus. The drums are loud and persistent. It is decidedly unmelodic, yet somehow catchy. The sinister “Icarus Smicarus,” meanwhile, is part post-punk fairy tale, part 78-rpm call to arms. And “Forget About Him, I'm Mint,” is a jaunty tale about rickshaws and thorazine.

Now, if only we can talk McLusky into making a comeback record in eight years. ■

**KEVIN CANFIELD** writes about music for *In These Times*.

BY PHYLLIS ECKHAUS

# Lincoln Unvarnished

In his inauguration speech, George W. Bush brazenly assumed the mantle of the Great Emancipator, quoting Abraham Lincoln while declaring world war in the name of human liberty. Clearly the elastic Lincoln icon

can be stretched in startling ways when Honest Abe, an eloquent autodidact of backwoods birth, can be appropriated by our current president, a legendarily incurious stumbling patrician prevaricator. But the comparison between the two controversial presidents is not entirely farfetched.

*American Brutus*, Michael W. Kauffman's fascinating examination of John Wilkes Booth's assassination plot, recounts the vehement hatred Lincoln generated, as he assumed sweeping powers and led what many saw as an imperialist war of aggression.

What Lincoln justified as judicious treatment of traitors during a national crisis others saw as lawless attacks on dissidents. And they had reason. At the outset of the Civil War, Lincoln began mass detentions—locking up citizens without charge and without access to judicial review. Throughout the country, military commissions tried civilians, and high-profile politicians were put to death. Secretary of State William Seward bragged of his ability to throw anyone in jail at whim.

Lincoln's ruthless prosecution of the war—especially his halt to POW exchanges, a policy that starved the South of soldiers—increased his unpopularity. Booth first won conspirators

## **American Brutus**

By Michael W. Kauffman  
Random House  
508 pages, \$29.95

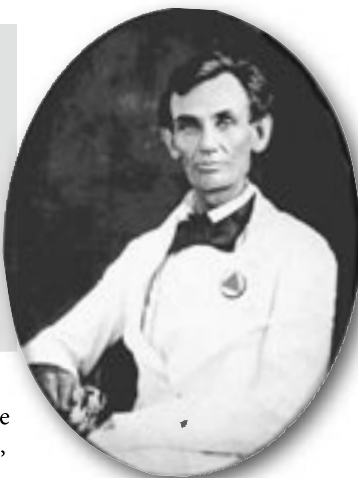
## **The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln**

By C. A. Tripp  
The Free Press  
344 pages, \$27

to his cause with a plan to abduct Lincoln in order to force renewed exchange of prisoners, a widely popular idea.

From Lincoln's perspective, there was a terrorist threat. From Canada, desperate Confederates planned unsuccessful attacks on civilian targets—plotting, for example, to spread yellow fever through infected clothes and actually carrying out a failed attempt to set a dozen Manhattan buildings ablaze.

Meanwhile, Lincoln was condemned as a tyrant. Kauffman notes that it was "not just the fringe element that hated the president; judges, senators, editors and otherwise respectable citizens left no doubt of their contempt." Booth, killed as he fled capture, had imagined history would hail him. But his infamy was sealed by the government's all-out campaign against his hapless sidekicks. Tried by military commission



for the nonexistent crime of "traitorous conspiracy," they were unable to defend themselves and were hanged.

We who love Lincoln blindly forgive him everything. Kauffman reminds us that blindness is bad for democracy.

It's also bad for history. In *The Intimate Life of Abraham Lincoln*, C.A. Tripp conclusively proves that historians are blind. His provocative book, which argues that Lincoln was gay, makes a good case—and an even more convincing case that historical narratives, inherently reductive and subjective, can never fully convey the truth.

To talk of Lincoln being gay is somewhat anachronistic—while the 19th century knew homosexual acts, gay identity wasn't invented until the 20th

century. But Tripp demonstrates that Lincoln was drawn to men, emotionally and physically. Most telling was Lincoln's relationship with Captain David Derickson, whose unit Lincoln chose for White House guard duty. Following the difficult birth of the Lincolns' youngest son, Mary Todd no longer shared her husband's bed or bedroom. Captain Derickson was President Lincoln's chosen bedmate—but only when Mary was away, suggesting that whatever the exact nature of Lincoln's relationship to the Captain, Lincoln himself recognized it would hurt Mary. Also suggestive is the fond recall of an early Lincoln bedmate who described the future president's "perfect" thighs.

Tripp's work has generated loud criticism from some Lincoln scholars, who point out various ways that Tripp, an amateur, probably misread the historical record. But the crux of their argument is that Lincoln and Derickson could not plausibly have been lovers precisely because the two were so open in their intimacy, a cringe-worthy attempt to preserve the vaunted heterosexuality of a beloved icon. (Indeed, in a bizarre last chapter Tripp himself goes blind with iconolatry, arguing that Lincoln was great *because* he was gay—and that if only FDR had been queer, Pearl Harbor could have been averted.)

Does Lincoln's sex life matter? Yes, because Lincoln the icon still exerts a powerful and problematic hold on our leaders and ourselves; we need to see him as a complex and flawed human being. Furthermore, the search for truth always matters. As long as ignorance and lies are deployed in the service of oppression, we should welcome seekers like Kauffman and Tripp, whose unsettling revisionist histories succeed in goading us toward truth. ■

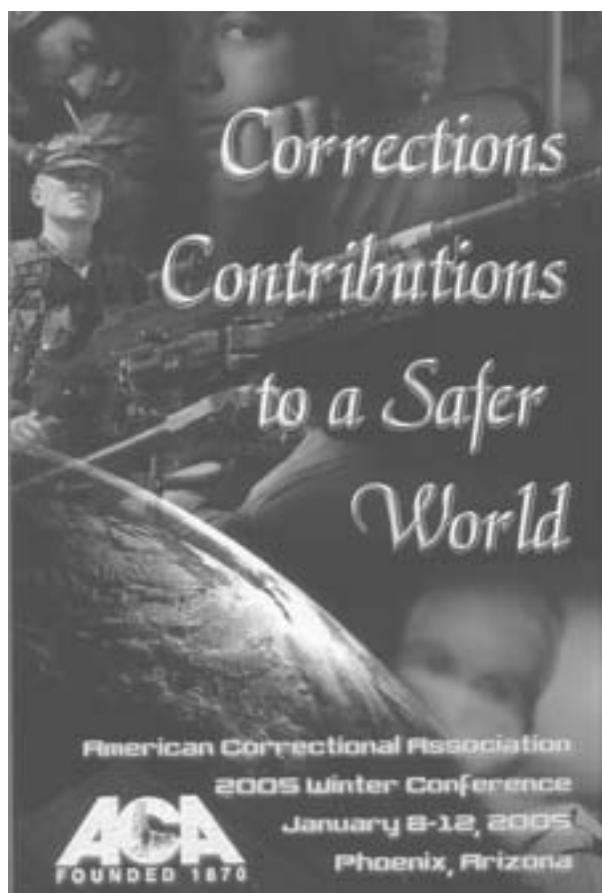
**PHYLLIS ECKHAUS** is a writer in New York.



# Cashing in on Cons

Continued from page 19

announced that sales were projected to slow in the months to come. The stock plunged 30 percent. As if all that weren't bad enough, Taser International President Tom Smith said in an interview that four active-duty police officers had been offered stock options for law enforcement training programs they supervised, which in turn had "led directly to the sale of Tasers to a number of police departments."



The cover of the 201-page booklet for the ACA's 2005 Winter Conference.

It's a good thing that former Taser spokesman Bernard Kerik cashed in when he did. The former New York City police commissioner made more than \$6.2 million in pre-tax profits from the sale of Taser stock in the month leading up to his abortive Homeland Security nomination.

## The venal system

Scores of individuals from prison acquisition and purchasing departments, consulting

agencies, and the ranks of high-level prison administrators had come to the conference for networking, recruiting and, above all, business. Private contractors, like food service businesses Aramark and Canteen, discreetly targeted these attendees for their off-site wine-and-dine dinners, issuing covert invitations to people whose badges indicated their importance in the field.

Following a day of tours at Arizona jails and prisons, about 60 conference-goers headed to the Canteen fete at an upscale Italian restaurant in the nearby Arizona Center. Cocktails and bottles upon bottles of wine were poured out prior to a multicourse meal. Wardens and top-ranking corrections administrators from Arizona, New Mexico and Maryland sat in the outdoor patio under heat lamps. Salesmen from Canteen were pressing flesh and passing out business cards. There were smiles all around.

Like so many other private companies working in prisons, Aramark and Canteen have had their share of problems. Aramark was singled out by "Stop the ACA" union-organized protests outside of the conference. On the third day of the conference, protesters snuck in and placed informational materials in the toilet seat cover holders of convention center bathrooms.

On the fourth day of the conference, Aramark sought to spruce up its image with a faux-New Orleans-style gentleman's "entertainer," complete with pink top, feather cap and black fishnets. The heavily made-up young woman knelt before prison administrators, giving them free shoeshines.

Aramark's low bids have succeeded in getting contracts in many jails and prisons. The company boasts that it provides more than a million meals a day to prisoners nationwide. Aramark materials also emphasize the company's adherence to ACA standards, but that hasn't stopped the allegations from piling up. In Dauphin County, Pa., for instance, a grand jury is investigating charges of overbilling and poor food

quality. In July 2004, New Mexico inmates at Los Lunas prison, fed up with Aramark's low food quality and "inedible" meat-type products, organized a hunger strike. Similar problems have been reported in at least a dozen states.

## Privatization, politicians and payola

The glossy *GEOworld* magazine, distributed at the ACA conference, trumpeted the success of the largest "Private-Public Partnership in the World," a sprawling detention center complex in Pecos, Texas. Known as the Reeves County Detention Facility (RCDC), the complex consists of prisons for both Bureau of Prisons and Arizona state inmates. According to GEO, "the joint venture ... between GEO Group and Reeves County has been a rewarding challenge."

Unmentioned was the fact that a Reeves County judge, Jimmy Galindo, is facing a lawsuit over his role in granting the private operation and expansive construction of RCDC. According to the local *Odessa American* newspaper, building RCDC has led to the "near financial ruin of the county." RCDC is currently the subject of an FBI and Texas Ranger investigation into tampering with government documents. (In addition, two corrections officers resigned in early January 2005 over sexual molestation charges.)

The RCDC is a private-public partnership in more ways than one. Randy DeLay, the brother of House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Tex.), lobbied the Bureau of Prisons to send its prisoners to RCDC, at the behest of county officials.

Randy DeLay isn't the only member of his family with an interest in corrections. In December, Rep. DeLay accepted a \$100,000 check from the CCA for the DeLay Foundation for Kids.

The CCA has become a leader in securing private prison contracts. In FY 2003, the CCA generated more than \$268.9 million in revenue. Greasing the palms of legislators nationwide hasn't hurt: In 2004, the CCA's political action committee gave \$59,000 to candidates for federal office—92 percent to Republicans.

This is part and parcel of an industry in the business of locking up human beings. As the industry has grown, the ACA has moved away from the ideals of rehabilitation and redemption of the human spirit. Today, human beings behind bars are little more than commodities to be traded on the open market.

Bill Deener, a financial writer for the

# The Wild, Wild West

**"SHERIFF JOE" ARPAIO**, who served as an ACA Arizona host committee chairperson, is revered in corrections circles for his law-and-order media savvy. At the conference, all the buzz was about Sheriff Joe's gleaming 620,000 square-foot 4th Avenue Jail in downtown Phoenix, which opened for business in 2004.

Palm print and iris scanners, video-visitation systems (complete with "scratch screens" to prevent damage from angry inmates), and a casino-style surveillance system that manages images from the facility's 700 cameras were among the high-tech bells and whistles featured on a tour of the windowless mega-jail. Many of the more than two dozen

private companies who collaborated to create the 4th Avenue Jail were exhibitors at the ACA conference, including the architectural firm Durrant/HOK; Trussbilt (cell-wall paneling, detention accessories, windows and steel doors); SpaceSaver (property shelving); and Multimedia Telesys, which also provided the audiovisual equipment for each workshop.

The goal had been to create an ultra-secure jail that maximized efficiency, something that jail captain Charles Johnson compared to "a car assembly line" in the July/August 2004 issue of *Correctional News*. Johnson also reported that Sheriff Joe kept complaining that the outside

of the jail looked "too pretty." The exterior of the facility was purposely designed so as not to upset locals and tourists headed to nearby Diamond-back Stadium.

Things are certainly not pretty for Maricopa County Jail inmates, and Sheriff Joe wants to keep it that way. He made sure that the \$137 million jail did not supplant Maricopa County's highly controversial tent city, where inmates are housed in the desert and put to work. Pink handcuffs, underwear and sheets for male inmates are used in all of the Maricopa County jails, as a way to assure "theft prevention"—or ensure humiliation, as the case may be. Low-quality,

cost-saving meals have been another way to ensure that inmates get the taste, look and feel of Sheriff Joe's style of punishment.

Leading up to Kerik's opening keynote address, Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon touted Sheriff Joe as the "toughest sheriff in the country," adding that if conference-goers found a bit of that infamous jail-house green bologna in their catered meals, they should "blame Joe."

The audience chuckled heartily.

—Silja J. A. Talvi



Sheriff Joe

*Dallas Morning News*, writing about recent gains in the private prison market, put it this way: "Crime may not pay, but prisons sure do."

In 1963, philosopher Hannah Arendt wrote about the "banality of evil." Contained within the packed exhibition hall of the ACA conference was evidence of what Arendt cautioned against: the normalization of dehumanization. Today, the banality of evil has found a home in the mundane marketplace that is the prison industry.

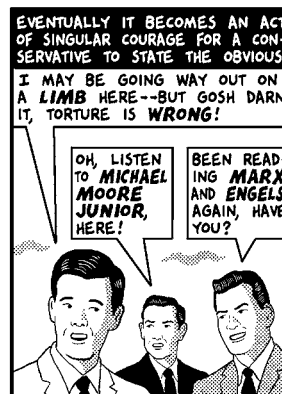
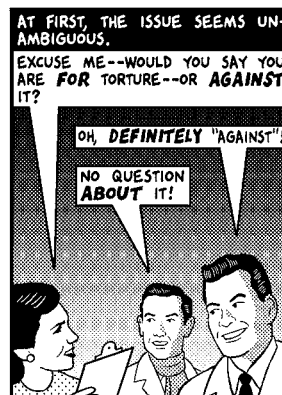
Three days before the ACA conference, MSN Money's Michael Brush issued a glowing report on the investment potential for the CCA and GEO. The children of the baby boomers, he explained, are about to enter the 18-24-year-old age group—"the years when people commit the most crimes." He suggested now is the right time to buy into the trend: "[T]he nation's private prison companies look like solid investments for the next several years." ■

**SILJA J.A. TALVI**, an award-winning journalist, is currently writing a book about women in prison. In reporting this story, Talvi did not disclose her identity as a journalist. All the attributed quotes in this article come from individuals speaking in an official capacity at ACA events.

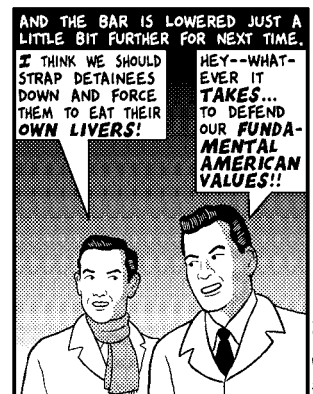
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# Slow Food

Continued from back page

have purchased their cheap food supply (we spend less on food as a percentage of our household income than any nation in the world) by depleting our topsoil and polluting our water, using growth hormones in livestock and pesticides on crops, maiming workers (many of them from Mexico and Central America) in our meatpacking plants, and using more energy resources than any other coun-

## Diet for a Dead Planet: How the Food Industry Is Killing Us

By Christopher D. Cook  
The New Press  
\$24.95, 320 pages

## Slow Food: The Case for Taste

By Carlo Petrini  
Columbia University Press  
\$14.95 (paper), 155 pages

try on the planet.

What does Cook want us to do about it, short of hurling Molotov cocktails at the Golden Arches (a fantasy I'll confess to having on more than one occasion)? First, he recommends that we "avoid as much [junk food] as possible and seek out healthy unadulterated alternatives." In other words, buy food with the planet in mind, and eat as if it were a moral act. But he acknowledges that our individual choices are not enough and encourages us to promote local alternatives like farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture farms and local food policy councils. Beyond that, he urges the promotion of "aggressive [federal] policies addressing a system of food production and consumption that is profoundly unhealthy and unsustainable." This means taking on the defenders of power and privilege

in Congress when they draft the next Farm Bill—the current one subsidizes unhealthy food and industrial agriculture.

In contrast to Cook's gloom-and-doom prognostications, the release of the paperback version of Carlo Petrini's *Slow Food: A Case for Taste* celebrates the joyful indulgence of good, locally produced food and wine. Petrini—an Italian whose charming prose ripples with gustatory rapture and thrasonic outbursts—pleads with us to slow down, taste the summer mountain grasses in the Asiago Stravecchio (nothing Velveeta-like, here), sip a *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano* on the terrace of a sunny Tuscan villa. Not that he is any more sanguine about the industrialized, globalized food system than Cook. Indeed, his outrage at McDonald's proposal to sell Big Macs at the sacred Spanish Steps of Rome galvanized the Slow Food Movement, which now has 65,000 members in 45 countries ([www.slowfoodusa.org](http://www.slowfoodusa.org)).

The Slow Foodistas have bolstered the case against industrial food by addressing the loss of biodiversity across the planet. Petrini alarmingly notes that since the beginning of the twentieth century we have lost 75 percent of our agricultural products' genetic diversity and half of our livestock breeds. Not only does this loss make us species-poor, it is, he writes, a major contributor to the "standardization of all [food] products and the flattening out of all flavors." That is why the land, the farmer and the location of food production are at the center of the Slow Food mission. As their U.S. home page states, they are an organization "dedicated to promoting stewardship of the land and ecologically sound food production ... regional, seasonal culinary traditions ... and living a slower and more harmonious rhythm of life."

Now I can fully support most of this, and I'm even capable of

enjoying a good Asiago (when I can afford it), but living a slower life doesn't always suit my chemistry. A couple of weeks ago, I attended a Slow Food event in Santa Fe, where if anything, people suffer from flavor overload. The event featured a discussion about squash—its variety, aesthetics, taste and cultivation. Good, well-intentioned folk spent two hours waxing enthusiastic over the variety of cucurbita arrayed before them, but no one mentioned that we live in New Mexico, one of the poorest states of the country, where nearly 15 percent of the population is hungry or food insecure. It seems a trifle self-indulgent to enjoy such esoteric pleasure in the midst of so much want. And how can love of squash topple the dairy-industrial complex, which at that very moment was metastasizing within the state's borders?

To their credit, Slow Food

people are asking similar questions. In the book's excellent introduction, editor Albert Sonnenfeld challenges the movement to address the "food gap" between rich and poor, the "perils of elitism," and the group's propensity to use Latin words like *convivia* and *Presidia* in describing their organization. (Using a dead language is one sure-fire way to muzzle your message.) Clearly, Slow Food is as intent on cultivating their members' social consciences as much as their palates. There is no contradiction between these important issues and Petrini's shameless advocacy of pleasure. After all, no one said the revolution couldn't be delicious. ■

**MARK WINNE** recently completed a two-year Food and Society Policy Fellowship with the Thomas Jefferson Agricultural Institute and writes and consults on community food system issues. E-mail: [win5m@aol.com](mailto:win5m@aol.com).

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BY MARK WINNE



# Slow Food for a Dying Planet

**T**AKE I-40 EAST FROM ALBUQUERQUE, N.M., for about three hours and hit the brakes just before the Texas border. Don't worry if you don't have a road map, the smell of cow manure will tell you where you are, and if you have your windows down to enjoy the scent of the high plains, the flies will soon be helping you drive. Welcome to Clovis, N.M., home to Cannon Air Force Base, the Santa Fe Burlington Northern Railroad, 65 dairy farms, five feedlots, what will be North America's largest cheese plant, and approximately 200,000 head of dairy and beef cows. If you want to see America's industrial food system in action, you're in the right place.

The train tracks give the feedlot operators and dairymen—many of them forced out of California by local health officials who deemed them polluters—a direct pipeline to the Iowa/Nebraska Corn Belt. The grain elevators located along the tracks unload 110 train carloads at a time, or a little over 20 million pounds of corn. The cows, held in open pens and milked three times a day, never graze on open pasture. In return for free room and board, each cow produces 75 pounds of milk a day and four tons of manure a year. For now, the milk is shipped to processing plants all over the Southwest, but when the cheese plant is operational in late 2005, the milk will travel only a few miles. There it will be turned into Velveeta-style cheese at the rate of one truckload per hour. When the 200,000 black and white Holstein cows are past their prime—about two to three years—they are sent off to a large slaughterhouse in Texas where they are ground up into beef patties for guess who: McDonald's, America's largest buyer of spent dairy cows.

Suspend disbelief for one moment and admire this system for what it is: a modern miracle of agriculture and food science, the triumph of capital over the limitations of man and nature, and a multistate food factory that has optimized the relationship between inputs and outputs for the near-perfect commodification of mankind's sustenance. But look again and you'll see the reality that Christopher Cook lays out in *Diet for a Dead Planet*: a food system that, like cows in a feedlot, is down on its knees in the muck, unsustainable, unhealthy and dangerously close to extinction. With a well-deserved bow to Frances Moore Lappe's classic *Diet for a Small Planet*, Cook goes after the oligarchical forces of multinational agribusiness with guns blazing. His take-no-prisoners style targets the evil-doers, junk-food purveyors, and despots of deception and greed whose system of mass food production and distribution will leave the earth in ruins and us humans simultaneously obese and starving.

Cook paints a grim picture. From the skull-and-crossbones on the book's cover to its penultimate chapter, he unrelentingly disembowels Wal-Mart, the Bush administration's Department of Agriculture, Archer Daniels Midland, and, of course, McDonald's. He reminds us that Americans

*Continued on page 31*